



MISS CURTIS

KATE · GANNETT · WELLS



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ABOUT PEOPLE.

A Volume of Essays.

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MISS CURTIS

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A Sketch

BY

KATE GANNETT WELLS

AUTHOR OF "ABOUT PEOPLE," "LESSONS IN ETHICS," "OUTLINES FOR
CONVERSATION AND STUDY," ETC.



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MISS CURTIS.

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST CALL.

Two quaint little figures were walking up Beacon Street with that old-fashioned air which belongs to immature responsibility, when there is something to be done that is of greater importance to the doer than to any one else.

“Do you suppose, Olive, that we’ve got to make grateful calls when you are a teacher and I’m in college?”

“I rather go without things, Owen, than have to take some things and have to thank people for other things,” was the eager, vexed reply; “but don’t let us talk,

I'm 'fraid I shall forget. It is just like learning your part in a play. First it is 'How do you do;' and, 'How do the family do;' and, How do I do. And then it is weather; and then it is how old you are, and where you go to school; and next it is general news, and then it is advice, and last it is good-by;" and the little face looked out from its mass of short brown curls as if it saw in every passer-by a stage prompter, who hissed at her the opening words of each sentence.

"I wish I'd read the newspaper," observed Owen, reflectively. "I can only think of family news and funerals. Let us hurry or you'll forget, Olive."

The two children hastened their speed, and went up the broad, curving, stone steps of a mansion. Owen laid his hand on the bell, but forbore to pull it till he was sure by the motion of Olive's muttering lips that she knew her part. They were ushered into the presence of a fine old lady,

who seemed to be evolved from the fleecy cloud which she was knitting. She welcomed the visitors with a benignity that disturbed the order of Olive's mental exercises, so that the girl could not recover her composure sufficiently either to answer Mrs. Preston's question or to ask the first in her own planned series of inquiries, but burst forth into a torrent of words that grew in rapidity until it ended.

“Yes, ma'am, thank you, the family is pretty well, and I am pretty well, and it is a real pleasant day, and I suppose I ought to be grateful for it; but weather and such things don't seem to make much difference to me, now I've got to grow up; and I am eleven years old, and I go to Miss Flint's school, and I don't like it, because she gives us flowers and says they are virtues and that we must cultivate them; and I don't like being a garden and full of weeds myself; and there is no news, and I try not to forget the advice they all give

me, though it is n't true, and —" She paused, and turning to her brother whispered, "That's all, is n't it?"

"Yes," said he, solemnly, and then added aloud to the lady on his own account, "Papa has finished his sermon and mamma's got to the heel of her stocking, and we're going."

The lady with the high curls enclosing her forehead, and with her well-bred manner, looked at them with an amazement which increased at each word. Suddenly realizing it all, — their stern, comical sense of duty, their queer distress, their droll awkwardness, and the feat of memory accomplished, — she dropped her knitting, drew Olive down by her on the sofa, and kissed her shining eyes with such a touch of comprehension that the child felt instantly freed from her burden of civility, and as if she had received a high mark for a composition. Impulsively she threw her arms around Mrs. Preston, saying, —

“Did you ever make calls when you were growing up? Was it easier in the old times than it is now?”

The lady looked wistfully at the troubled countenance that sought hers, with its burden of self-imposed duty and self-examination stamped on every feature; then slowly caressing the clustering curls, she answered, —

“I don’t think I ever took life so conscientiously as you do, dear; but life does grow easier as one grows older, for one understands it better.”

Olive looked puzzled; yet she played with Mrs. Preston’s rings and twirled them round on her own fingers, and wondered if diamonds and sapphires atoned for being old.

Owen had withdrawn to the table of carved ivory chessmen; each pawn was two inches high, and the castles were true fortresses of defence. He was displeased. Mrs. Preston had tried to take his hand, so he had thrust one into his pocket and had

severely clenched his cap with the other. She, in return, changed her tactics, and her manner became so adroitly appreciative of his sense of offended family honor, that his silent wrath against his effusive sister was appeased, and he condescended to allow himself to be entertained. Inwardly he vowed that he would have nothing more to do with girls; they could not be trusted, they were so emotional.

The minutes wore away, and the children bade good-by in a much more natural manner than that in which they had given their greeting.

"We've got through it first-rate;" exclaimed Owen, forgetful of his previous wrath, as they went down the hill.

"Yes," replied Olive, "only I forgot to ask her first how she did; but then, you told her about mamma's stocking-heel, so that makes up. Did you see her rings, Owen?" and Olive drew a long sigh.

But all this happened long ago.

CHAPTER II.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

OLIVE and Owen were brother and sister. Their father, for aught they knew, had always been a minister. Their mother did not seem to them much older than they two were, put together; for she was not so afraid that she might not do what was proper as was Owen, and she was a great deal prettier than Olive.

The home was one of principles, not of rules. This was a great disturbance to Owen, as it obliged him to settle matters himself, when he much preferred to have things settled for him. It also had the disadvantage of making him feel as if the fate of nations depended upon his own rectitude much more than was at all prob-

able. Mrs. Cadwallader's method of education in enabling the children to govern themselves, rather than her insistence upon any special code of regulations, kept Olive in a state of constant effervescence. The child explained herself by saying that she never knew how far down she should settle, and that when she got to the finality of anything there was little of it; though it was just like the sediment in any other process of thinking, — right for right's sake.

A lady parishioner, of the genus remonstrant, once asked Mrs. Cadwallader if she were not running a risk in making her children responsible beings too soon.

"No," replied she; "I want them to feel the sense of universal relationships before they can understand what those words mean. If they can but dimly apprehend that law, it will prevent them from becoming conventional. There is nothing so deadening for children as a perception of conventionality."

The parishioner shrugged her shoulders to such a degree that her chest expanded, and asked, —

“How did Philadelphia compare with Boston when your husband was settled there? Since the Revolution its ladies are said to have grown very *recherché*.”

“Oh,” answered Mrs. Cadwallader, “one can never move away from the neighborhood of conventionality in either city, but one can at least keep its spirit out of one’s own home. And as for the weight of responsibility resting too heavily upon children, the gymnasium and athletics keep it from pressing upon their bodies; it only floats over their minds.”

“But in Philadelphia, my dear Mrs. Cadwallader, each lady knows her own place; and it is not fashionable — I mean, no necessity exists there for reasoning.”

“Intuitions are incomparably shorter than logical processes,” was the curt reply.

Thus slowly and apparently unevenly, under the influences of free inquiry and of a categorical imperative, Olive and Owen grew up, loving their mother with an ardor which perhaps would have lessened if they had guessed how she guided them. She trusted much to the arguing faculty embedded in every child, as a counter-irritant against weak committal of silly deeds or sillier thoughts, and she allowed her boy and girl to work out their own solution of moral problems.

For a long while "could n't" and "would n't" were mixed up in the children's minds. Olive and Owen had debated the subject, until each was on the other's side. They were never quite sure when "could n't" was apology, or when "would n't" implied obstinacy.

"You know," Owen stated, "I could n't do the things I would; I could n't run a quarter-mile in fifty-two seconds, I could not jump twenty-two feet, even if I would."

“But you know,” replied Olive, “that you would n’t be either a sneak or a ‘snipe,’ if you could be. I tell you, Owen, you just notice how it is ; with girls it is always could n’t, because we have not got so much daring in us ; and with boys it is would n’t, because they are set in their ways.”

Olive was such an honest-minded child that she never learned the art of not telling all she saw, heard, and thought. With her, the truth seemed to mean its delivery at the wrong time, so that she was constantly readjusting herself to circumstances which might never have occurred if she had not said too much. She secretly nourished a romantic ideal of her first and only love, the hero of her future life, whose prototype should guide her earliest years. Nothing made her more wretched than a joke which in any way reflected upon her singleness of heart. All boys, except the visionary one of the future, were to her as so many girls. To speak to her of any special

one as her little beau would excite her utmost indignation.

There was a tale in the family, that when not more than eight years old she had rung a neighbor's door-bell and asked if Mrs. Manahan were at home.

"No, miss," replied the maid, who had answered the summons. "Will you leave your message?"

"Yes," returned Olive, drawing up her little figure with a determined air. "Yes; tell Mrs. Manahan that I am Olive Cadwallader, and that I came over here to tell her there was no truth in that story about me and John, — the girls don't know anything about it. You tell her I'm not in love with John anyway; he is too little for me, and he is n't very good-looking either."

"Oh," observed the maid, half amused, and half zealous for the reputation of the family she served, "you are not so good-looking yourself, with your freckles and

your coarse hair, that you need be so particular."

"I know I'm not," returned Olive, calmly; "but mamma says I shall be smart some day."

Olive adored her brother, in spite of his many futile efforts on behalf of her improvement in conventional ways. She considered the most heroic act of her life to have been a compulsory visit away from home without him, when she regularly cried herself to sleep for want of Owen.

"Owen must go to school," reasoned her mother, "so he could not come with us."

"Oh, mamma," she said, between her sobs, "I don't care whether or not he is a scholar, if he will only love me. I want Owen, my brother; I can't help loving my fellow-creature, my Owen."

Her submission to him had once been carried so far that it threatened to give her a chronic cold. When Owen found that it was incumbent on him to take charge of

his sister out of doors, it became necessary for him to invent plays in which she could not interfere. One of the most successful was that of station-master, to which pre-eminence she was daily elected. While he, with other boys, could be seen careering up and down the sidewalk on their velocipedes, as if they were driving engines, Olive could be found ensconced in the corner of a doorstep, her teeth chattering, her nose, hands, and feet cold, in consequence of her appointment, which compelled her to remain quiet in one place.

Notwithstanding her affection for Owen, there was one point on which she owed him a grudge. He was much larger than she, and as Mrs. Cadwallader was obliged to be economical, she sometimes insisted upon Olive's wearing the merino shirts which Owen had outgrown. Olive rebelled, alleging that to wear any part of a boy's dress was one of the most painful, personal experiences a little girl could undergo.

CHAPTER III.

CHRISTMAS.

MRS. CADWALLADER had great faith in the many excellences derived from making calls. She did not believe in the sudden coming out of girls, now so much in fashion. She preferred that they should imperceptibly slide into society, and that there should never be any special age in which children should feel themselves exempt from the duties either of entertaining or being entertained. As Mr. Cadwallader was a minister, the children had had many experiences in this direction, when Owen was called gentlemanly and Olive frank; both adjectives conveying a sense of disapprobation to their youthful minds, as was indeed meant, especially when Olive either

violently avoided or stolidly endured the effusive greeting of personality conveyed in a kiss.

Christmas had become a season of agony, as each gift entailed a call, or worse still a grateful note, which had to be correctly spelled and neatly written. Many a time had Owen declared that he would rather be an illiterate hermit than have to write his "Thank you." There was a sad monotony and a just appreciation of the giver's excellence in all the letters, which would have made any one of them a type of the others.

There had been one Christmas in his life which for prearranged malice had exceeded all the discomforts of other jubilees. Owen and Olive were invited to a Christmas party with six other children. The invitations said that each one was to choose his own present. What could be more delightful? Imagination had run riot from bicycles, guns, and skates to dolls and

jewelry. At the appointed hour the eight children appeared at Miss Curtis's. She received them in an old-fashioned square room, full of heavy mahogany furniture. Tall candlesticks of blue wedgwood with crystal pendants were ranged on the high mantel-piece. After questioning them in the inane, stereotyped manner in which people ask about home and school, she observed, —

“Children, I like to study character, so don't be frightened. Do just as you feel; it is a big house. I'm going to take you in to the presents by couples, and when you have chosen, you can stay by yourselves in twos until supper is ready, and then you can go home;” she gave a little groan, adding, “I shall know your characters.”

“What is that?” whispered the youngest of the group.

“It's yourself,” answered Miss Curtis, solemnly, for she had overheard the remark. After that no one spoke.

Bob and Gracie went first. What happened to them was never known, only that Miss Curtis was gone a long time, and had a strange expression on her face when she again entered the parlor. At last came Owen's turn, with Olive. They were ushered into a room in the centre of which stood a large table. On it there was a pile of beautiful dolls of all sizes and dressed in every fashion. Next to them was a heap of big shells, then a heap of little shells and chocolate creams. Drums and trumpets lay close to spelling and arithmetic books. Empty purses and pyramids of coppers were contrasted; a coral pin and a bit of sponge coral; a jointed wooden snake and a snake with a toad in its mouth, preserved in a bottle of alcohol, were in juxtaposition.

Olive and Owen walked round and round the table. Miss Curtis, perched on a whirl-a-gig high-chair, watched every movement and expression. The children were awed.

Choice was more difficult than in the famous selection of Portia's caskets. Five, ten minutes passed.

"Time's up. Choose, but don't touch. Nothing is certain in life," announced Miss Curtis.

Owen had begun to suspect foul play; he was determined to know his fate at once, so he faced Miss Curtis squarely, put one foot in front of the other, and in a bravado tone demanded,—

"Can I have what I want, or what I don't want?"

"That depends," was the answer.

"Well, how many things can I have?" asked Owen, rather impatiently this time.

"That depends still more."

He looked at her as a youthful offender eyes the judge; his sense of justice was aroused. It was not April Fool's day; the written invitation had said they were to choose their own presents.

"But you have not told me yet how

many I can choose," said he, after reflection.

"That too depends: manner is more than words."

"Umph!" muttered Owen, indignantly.

"Eh!" remarked Miss Curtis, maliciously.

"Umph!" muttered Owen again; "if I am in for it, I may as well be blamed for a dozen as for one."

"Eh!" observed Miss Curtis again, with rising inflection.

Owen's courage rose. "Very well," began he; "I'll take a drum and trumpet, as they go together, the coppers, the snake that has got the toad in its mouth, and—" he looked pityingly at the half-swallowed captive, and dropped into a chair, frightened at his own temerity.

Miss Curtis's countenance had become impenetrable.

"It's your turn, child," she said to Olive.

The girl had been wondering if it would be any use to pray upon the matter; she

did not want to bungle, as she usually did, but she could not think of anything pleasant to say. The old formula of the grateful letters she had written came to her mind, and she began and rattled it off in the same way in which she had rehearsed her part when she and her brother called on Mrs. Preston.

“I think you are very kind to remember me, and I am very much obliged to you, and I hope you had a merry Christmas, and will keep well all winter, and your presents are very” — she hesitated — “remarkable,” she continued, “and just what I want.”

She stopped short, and in spite of all her self-control began to tremble.

Whether it were the words, or the sight of the terror she had inspired, Miss Curtis's expression rapidly softened, though her tone was as severe as ever as she asked, —

“Well, which is it?”

“This,” said Olive, laying her hand on a common conch-shell. “Thank you very

much," but not knowing what she was saying or touching.

"Take it!" shouted Miss Curtis; and then in a lower tone, "I would n't have believed it, I would n't have believed it, and that coral pin right there!"

She rose and showed the children into another room, — Owen with nothing in his hand and Olive with her shell. The door was slammed to. Owen, grown preternaturally old within the last fifteen minutes, peaked through the key-hole and listened. When he had convinced himself that no one was outside, he strode up and down the room, exclaiming: "It is n't fair! She's the meanest old cat I ever saw! She's a shirk, — a regular fraud! I'll be even with her, I will! I'll send her jelly-cake stuffed with red pepper! I'll put castor-oil into it! I'll burn up those hateful things, and she sha' n't have any insurance!"

"Stop, mercy's sake, stop!" exclaimed Olive. "Wait till we get home. Oh, dear!

I shall cry. What do I want of this pesky old shell? I had n't the courage to take anything, but I did n't exactly mean to take this. I should have died right down like Ananias and Sapphira if I had taken the pin; it was just lovely!"

The brother and sister threw themselves on a sofa, half laughing, half crying, and talking. In a little while some one entered wearing a mask. Olive declared afterward that it was a man; but Owen always asserted that it was a woman. The form opened the door, saying, —

"She wants you to come to supper."

In the dining-room they found the other children, who seemed to be joyless, yet still anticipating. They had nothing in their hands. The shell was in Olive's pocket. It was a good supper; four helmeted soldiers of pink, green, brown, and white ice-cream guarded the corners of the table; oysters, candies, jellies, lemonade, snappers, — but no one dared to snap. In the cen-

tre of the table lay lengthwise a baby. Its skin looked warm and soft. How could it be so quiet? It was neither a white baby nor a negro baby; could it be an Indian pappoose? Where did it come from? The oysters were eaten; it was time for the ice-cream. How queer not to have cake with it!

“Children,” began Miss Curtis, “people nowadays are getting too particular about their food; cooking-schools spoil them, and make them expensive, so they use olive oil when lard is good enough for frying; pork is all my mother ever had, — sweet pork from her own corn-fed pig; so I’ve got a baby for you to eat. Give me the knife, Michael!”

She took it from the waiter and brandishing it aloft, asked, “Will you have a leg or an arm?”

No one spoke. Some were appalled, others were puzzled, two were inclined to take it as a huge joke. Owen was deter-

mined not to bear any more trifling; so he answered, —

“A piece of the liver, ma’am.”

Plunge went the knife into the baby, out came the red spurting stream; a cry of horror went up from the children.

“It’s cranberry; it’s stuffed with cranberry sauce!” shouted Owen, who had pushed up close to the table and put his finger into the gushing jet, and then had thrust his finger into his mouth and smacked his lips.

Miss Curtis fairly glowered at him. The company, once convinced that it was a hideous joke, crowded about the table and indulged in feeble fun.

“Let’s eat her up!” “My! ain’t she fat, though?” “She’s real tender!” “Let’s play we are cannibals!” “See who can eat the most!”

They did eat, so well and so fast that legs, arms, head, — sponge-cake outside and cranberry sauce inside, — soon disap-

peared ; and they all went home vowing that they would never eat any more babies, and that next time they would go somewhere else to get their presents. Only Owen remarked to his father, —

“I should n’t think your sermons could have done as much good as might be expected, papa ; but perhaps Miss Curtis always went to sleep when you preached about Christmas.”

CHAPTER IV.

REVENGE.

WHEN Olive had recovered from the disappointment of Miss Curtis's Christmas, she recognized in it the designs of Providence as hints to her concerning the study of character, which she in turn intended to apply to that lady. After due reflection, she decided it was proper to make a party call upon that curious woman; but she could induce Owen to accompany her only as far as the door, where he said he would wait to see if she came out alive; though he gave her his card to leave, in true manly fashion.

“Well, what did you find,” was his question as she appeared, — “fish, flesh, or fowl?”

“Neither,” answered Olive. “It’s woman ; she’s to be pitied.”

“Are you going to take care of her?”

“I’m going to see what I can do about it. Something’s got to be done. She’s going to have another party, — something like the other, only no baby, — to find out more people’s characters, and I’m thinking how we can stop her without killing her wholly. It’s our duty, Owen.”

“What did she say to you?”

“Say! Why, what do you think she’s going to do? She’s actually going to invite some poor children, and put money and toys about and pretend not to watch, and then see if they won’t steal! She says people are always wicked, and you’ve got to find ’em out beforehand; after that you can learn all about ’em from the newspapers, — how they go on and how they don’t go on.”

“Leave her to me,” said Owen; “I’ll fix her.”

Olive looked at her brother and he looked at her, without winking or smiling. Both seemed satisfied, and began to talk of something else. Just as they went into the house he remarked,—

“Say, Olive, when is she going to have that circus?”

“Thursday,” was the answer. Again they looked at each other and again both seemed satisfied.

Thursday came. Owen seemed pensive throughout the day, Olive expectant. At supper, in that inconsequent way which wives have when they have been busy and doubt whether their husbands have been equally occupied, Mrs. Cadwallader asked Mr. Cadwallader where he had been all day.

“Well, for one thing,” he replied, “I’ve been to see Miss Curtis. She was to have had a children’s party this afternoon, but she’s too sick.”

Owen moved in his chair as if a crumb choked him.

"It appears," the father continued, "that somebody sent her a box of cream-cakes; she ate one, but it tasted so hot that she tried another, and that one made her sick."

"Is she going to die?" inquired Owen, thick of voice and pale in color.

"I don't think so; but she sent for two doctors,—one for each cream-cake, she told me," said Mr. Cadwallader carelessly, yet looking out of his left eye at Olive and out of his right eye at his son. No one spoke again till the meal ended.

When the husband and wife were alone, he began, —

"My dear, do you suppose —"

"My dear," she interrupted, "all comes round to him who can wait."

Miss Curtis soon recovered. When Owen beheld her at her parlor window, he rang the door-bell and asked to see her. As he was ushered into her presence his courage almost forsook him. Not allowing himself the hypocrisy of saying he was

glad to see her, or glad that she was better, he put his cap under his arm, his hands in his pockets, assumed the first position and began, —

“Miss Curtis, you know how I owed it to you to be even with you ; so I got the cream-cakes, and put red pepper into one and castor oil into the other, and sent them to you. But I thought you ’d smell it first, — I always do, — and then you would n’t have been sick. I ’m real sorry I did it.”

“You ’re sorry, are you? You did it, did you?” broke forth Miss Curtis ; “and I should have brought an action against the confectioner for poisoning, if I had n’t seen the box in which they came, and your name half rubbed out on the under side. I sent for your father to give me consolation, but he was very mixed up. It’s a wise father who knows his own son ; it hurts pulpit eloquence to have a bad son. Pews are n’t worth much as investments anyhow nowadays, and when they go way down in

value, boys' papas don't have so much salary. Being poor is real religious."

"Oh, ma'am," cried Owen, discouraged at the prospect of his father's lessened salary, for even as it was Owen did not have all he wanted, "papa was n't to blame; he knew nothing about it, nor Olive neither. I did not tell any one, not even Olive; I only looked at her and —" he paused.

"Well?" asked the old lady in a high-pitched voice, as if to penetrate into his innermost wretchedness.

"And she looked at me, Miss Curtis, but I can swear she never thought of my doing so; and ever since she heard you were sick she's been looking so responsible, when I never talked to her the least thing about it."

"Umph!" replied Miss Curtis; "looks are as plain as words. You both better give lessons in dramatic action. Now, swear, if you know how, that your sister had noth-

ing to do with your plot to kill me, or I'll —”

“I do swear, ma'am, I do!” said the poor boy, piteously.

“Umph! that's all you know about swearing, is it? Well, go home now and tell your father that I say for him not to give you any more pocket-money.”

He hurried out of the room without even bidding good-by. To be so insulted, when he was apologetic; and she was n't killed, only had learned a good lesson! To add to his indignity, his father withheld his allowance for three months, just as Owen intended to buy a new brown and yellow flannel shirt in which to look invincible through the summer. When in college, he was heard to say that he had never eaten a cream-cake since he was a little boy.

CHAPTER V.

QUITS.

THIS attempt at Miss Curtis's reformation increased Olive's sense of responsibility. On her rested atonement; but to what degree? Should she confess that she had truly hoped that something not very bad would happen to Miss Curtis, and that she had really looked at her brother? She had just read the "Marble Faun." She thought of Miriam's glance, of Donatello's act, of the priest's death; yet Miss Curtis had only been wholesomely sick. Olive remembered, by way of contrast, that Dante had been helped by looking up to Beatrice; yet he had written about hell. So the girl had recourse to her journal, but could not write out at length her reflections in the few lines

belonging to each day's record. Not recovering her equanimity, she turned back to the first page of her book and drew solace from its dedication. It was so touching, it might mean so much. She had written it on one of her pessimistic days, when her parents did not understand her and she had felt lonely. The words ran, "To my future husband, if ever he should care to know what I was when I was a girl." Strengthened by the motto, "Do all I don't want to do," which she had later inscribed below when her conscience chided her for filial ingratitude and want of proper appreciation of the value of daily trials, she decided to go to Miss Curtis.

"Miss Curtis," began Olive, "I know you've been sick, and I'm real sorry for you, but sorrier for myself. I did not know anything about the cream-cakes, but I did tell Owen that you must not have another party, and we just looked at each other, and I knew he'd prevent it; but I never thought

how, and I've been miserable ever since it happened."

"So you too wanted to kill me?" asked the lady.

"No, I did n't; I only wanted you not to have another party. You never will, will you?" urged Olive.

"That's none of your business, child. So you just looked at Owen and he looked at you, and then he tried to commit murder."

"Oh no, ma'am, we did n't; he did n't;" and the black waters which closed over Donatello's priest rose before her, and she almost shrieked. "We did n't either of us. I'll never look at him again when he is thinking and I am thinking; but really, truly, all we saw in each other was that you must not do it. I see now, looks are as bad as words, even if you don't know what you are going to say. Oh dear! I never knew responsibility went into looks; it gets into everything! oh dear, oh dear!" and Olive began to sob.

“What are you crying for, child? I ain’t killed.”

“And you never shall be! I’m going to come and cook for you and make up for my look.”

“Will you stay here to-night with me?” hissed Miss Curtis.

“Yes, — always.”

“Then go home and tell them you are coming right back here.”

“Yes, ma’am.”

Olive turned and walked out of the house before she had realized what she had done. The cool air braced her nerves; her self-confidence and her desire to make atonement told her she could endure the test. She met her mother’s misgivings bravely, and with a patronizing, compassionate embrace of Owen, she returned to Miss Curtis.

That lady had been watching her from the window. When she saw her actually coming, bag in hand and waving at her tri-

umphantly, she rang the bell and ordered — cream-cakes.

Then she gave herself up to entertaining Olive. She opened a basket of bonbons, she unlocked a drawer of treasures for her inspection, she told her stories of knights and ladies, till Olive forgot all fear and sat on the cushion at her feet twirling an antique ring with the mediæval motto, “N’auray aultre.”

“You are curious, child,” said Miss Curtis, as Olive twisted round the ring on her hostess’s finger. “I suppose you think it was given me. Well, it was n’t; I bought it. People buy sentiment cheaper than they can grow it.”

The tea was served from wedgwood dishes that matched the candlesticks in their pale blue color and delicate white tracery of mythological events, showing that they must have been wrought under the artistic criticism of the old Josiah Wedgwood, whose descendants have de-

viated into purplish blue colors and heavy embossing.

The waiter handed Olive a plate of cream-cakes. The girl colored ; she glanced at Miss Curtis, who began to have that strange expression which Olive so well remembered since Christmas day.

“No, thank you,” said Olive, declining the attention.

“Take it !” ordered Miss Curtis, sternly.

Olive instantly made up her mind. Right here in her life was to be the supreme act of vicariousness, the utter abnegation of self for the sake of her brother, the life given for a life attempted. She took and ate. She tasted pepper and oil, but she ate it, while Miss Curtis, with hands clasped round the wedgwood teapot, as if to hold it or herself firmly, glowered at her in silence.

“Shall I die ?” thought Olive. “Good-by, mamma, good-by, Owen ;” and still she ate. Her throat burned, but not a tear fell.

With the last mouthful she looked up gratefully, and took up the conversation at the exact point where it had dropped. Miss Curtis's hands relaxed, her voice was a little tremulous. After supper the waiter told the cook that Miss Cadwallader was a match in spunk for their mistress's terrible-ness when she got going.

The evening soon ended with more bonbons and a game of checkers, in which the old lady took visible pleasure in beating her guest. Olive dreamed that her speech was henceforth incarnated into her looks, and that a monument had been erected to her by a grateful brother. The next morning she went home happy in her sense of victory, but told no one of the cream-cakes, not even her mother or Owen, though she wrote it down in her journal for the benefit of her husband, if ever she should meet him.

CHAPTER VI.

OLIVE.

OLIVE had put the shell on her mantel-piece, and there it stayed as a day of judgment, of vision, and as a reminder of weekly visits to Miss Curtis; for the old lady had become very fond of her, and Olive had learned to understand and guide the kind of dynamite bitterness which underlay the aged heart. She kept it from bursting into action, and even its explosive words seldom now poured forth except in the safety-valve of her presence. She soothed the lady's fears and restored her confidence in girls and boys, though Miss Curtis never learned to trust Owen. The mere fact of his existence seemed to her like a handwriting on the wall, and

like Belshazzar she trembled, lest the boy should again exercise judgment upon her.

Olive had grown, but had not altered much, since the early days of her acquaintance with Miss Curtis. She was no longer a child, she was not yet a young lady. As she expressed it in imitation of mock philosophy, she was a potentiality and a conscious personality. Her journal she had long ago laid aside with a sad laugh for the way in which she had pitied herself. She now had too many occupations to write down how she felt. There was very little in her life which was not known to Miss Curtis, who comprehended the girl's intense longing for usefulness and activity better than did Olive herself.

"Mothers ought to die," reasoned Miss Curtis, "in order to make room for their girls. Young ladies who are needed at home do not have to go around reforming and legislating; but what on earth can they do when their mothers keep about?

As for reading English literature as a balm to their minds, it's nonsense, — this keeping company with books when you are silent partner! It is not Nature's way. Give a girl action: let her father be a widower with little ones; let her oldest brother marry when he has n't a cent, — kill off his wife, bring home the child, — then the girl that's got a mother living has something to do. She can read history and novels for composure, but keep her from literature, — it only makes her supercilious; or if it does n't, she's always saying what other people think, instead of finding out what she herself thinks."

Under the scolding good sense of her queer friend and the loving care of her mother Olive was acquiring a sense of responsibility, and a desire for action apart from meditation, which might become oppressive in its effect upon others, and which also might injure her own longing for graceful effects. . It was well that her

tendency to impatience was curbed by the far-reaching views of life her mother held.

Mrs. Cadwallader was one of those women who never used parentheses in conversation. The result of her constant thought was always bubbling up in short, crisp sentences, which, as they had become a family joke, she tried to avoid or to lengthen, but in vain. It is harder to modify one's style in conversation than in writing. Olive's favorite term of mingled admiration, reproof, and confidence for her mother was "my ejaculatory mamma," shortened into "jac-mamma." Perhaps if Mrs. Cadwallader had not sought so eagerly to justify existence in apology for it, Olive would not have grown so philosophic, as a matter of necessity.

The girl was never unhappy, yet at times her notion of accountability to everybody and everything was very wearing. In spite of this, her absolute frankness of manner, her real reserve in all that

regarded herself, and her perfect health made her a very attractive maiden. She knew she was not beautiful, but she accepted the responsibility of plainness, and paid much attention to her toilet and the arrangement of her hair. She always contrived to make other girls appear at their best, never advising them wrongly concerning the colors which suited their complexions, or making them feel ill at ease. As a natural consequence she was a general confidante and favorite, the girls calling her stylish and sweet, and the boys "a boss trump."

Olive was a fair scholar, invariably detecting, by virtue of uncanny penetration rather than of knowledge, any slight mistakes which her teachers might make. This peculiarity was very aggravating and unnecessary, but it was part of her frankness, not of her ill-humor.

There was one point on which she always came into contact with her instructors, — the

right to go to parties while yet at school. She had even handed in a composition on the subject, which had been returned as immature, and she had been relegated to the topic given out to the youngest class, — a prose version of “We are Seven.” Not even this belittling reprimand could change her convictions. She asserted the inalienable right of girls to go to the evening dancing-classes, and she openly declared her belief in the german as preferable, in its effect upon the character, to the study of mathematics or historical dates. Boys were not dangerous, she argued, and there was no harm in accidentally meeting them in recess; they did not divert the mind from lessons, but acted as stimuli. The teacher’s province was in the school-room; education was a term applied to the whole of life; a life from which the society element was excluded until one was out of school was meagre, narrow, fearful, and made a girl a regular stick, a social incubus. Take

boys and parties as one goes along, and then one does not get excited, was her maxim. The lady principal told her that if she did not give her mind to her lessons, her thoughts would dance with her feet.

"But they don't, and my averages show that they don't," was her conclusive reply.

"You'll enjoy life better if you wait till you are older and know more," was rejoined.

"I don't care to know a great deal," retorted Olive. "I rather know how to make the most of a little. I want to be happy instead of being ambitious. Average girls have got to be average in everything but happiness, and I know lots of educated people who are unhappy."

"German philosophy is the root of happiness," insisted Fraulein X., the first assistant.

"French phrases make you sparkle and use your pretty hands in conversing," pleaded Madame, the Parisian teacher.

"History makes you comprehensive," stated Professor O.

"All very true," replied Olive to each in turn. "I know that Toorgenef and Tolstoï are not Schopenhauer and Freytag ; I can jabber enough French for a courier, and I understand the causes of all the decisive battles in the universal histories, from the taking of Jericho to Irish evictions ; but I don't like doing guerilla warfare in encyclopædias just to know facts and summaries. I like other things better than study. I don't care for per cents ; I would n't give a fig to be a college graduate and eat corn-starch ice-cream at alumni reunions. Yet you all want me to study, study !"

What could be done with a girl who would sleep if she were sleepy, eat when she was hungry, dance, chatter, and make every one, even teachers, happy ; never miss in her lessons, yet never be a brilliant scholar ?

Olive revenged herself for the advice she

did not need by being full of theories as to the way in which she ought to have been brought up, and as to the way in which she would bring up her children. To keep a fashionable boarding-school, and show people that fashionable girls had more sense than the ordinary kind of good girls, was the height of her ambition. Fashion was maligned; she must justify it. Nobody understood girls; it was a great shame. So she went on studying, dancing, sewing, cooking, sweeping, dusting, rowing on the pond, riding on horseback, walking with a pedometer, having innumerable friends but no chums (as fashionable, frank girls don't), laying much stress on sitting straight, walking erect, and dressing well. But she kept her best thought to herself, with the fixed purpose of thus acquiring Greek harmony of mind and body, of justifying her own ideal, and of being a Vittoria Colonna for her future Michael Angelo, if ever she should meet him.

CHAPTER VII.

AN INTRUDER.

“OH, Miss Curtis,” said Olive one day, “it seems as if I should go wild! I can’t make myself what I want to be. I can’t make mamma into my ideal self, because she and papa are a close corporation and make their own by-laws; if I only just had some one to be my other self! Owen used to fancy, when he was a little fellow, that he had a son. If mamma wanted him to do something, he could n’t, as he had an engagement with his son; and if she gave him sweetmeats, he always saved half for his son, till his table drawer broke down, it was so full of dried goodies. We had to take him to places where he said his son was, to show him that he was n’t there;

but as it almost broke his heart not to find him, we let him and his son alone after a time. Now, I don't want a son, only my other self, — all that I can't be."

"What is your other self going to be?" asked Miss Curtis.

"Oh," replied Olive with a gasp, "she's going to be happy because it is natural; she is n't going to have oughts in her life, but wants; and she is to be free to satisfy all her wants, and —"

"Free to do as she pleases, like American girls in Europe," interposed Miss Curtis.

"No, aunt," for thus Olive often called her. "I can't explain it, — but free to do right because she is n't bound by any wanting to do wrong. She is to be neither single-minded nor duplex, but complex; so she will have the unity of variety or the variety of unity, I am not sure which would be the rarer. I want her to have the freedom of necessarily doing as she ought to do. Aunt Curtis, I wish mothers

would see that it is necessary to leave their daughters free. ‘Kein mensch musz müssen,’ ” added she in a half whisper.

“German fiddlesticks!” muttered Miss Curtis,—“safer, though, than English literature. Philosophizing over life is n’t finical like criticism on books; that’s like prickly pears,—mind and mouth get puckered. As to mothers, most women have n’t any right to be mothers, except to babies; they don’t know when their children have grown up.”

Just then Owen’s whistle was heard outside the window, and Olive obeyed its summons. “What’s the matter?” she asked.

“Nothing much,” was the reply; “it is too bad to have called you away. It is only a personal matter; but as I was going to lead the german this evening, it is just my luck to have my fun spoiled by that Western fellow coming to-night. I shall have to be round introducing him all the time, and can’t go off on my own devices.”

“Has he come already?” inquired Olive.

“No, but he’s telegraphed; those ranch fellows are as easy with telegrams as I am with postals.”

“I don’t see what harm he is going to do; any kind of a boy is better than some kind of girls,” remarked Olive, soothingly.

“If it were a flabby girl, you’d feel as badly as I do with a cow-boy on my hands.”

Olive winced. Both knew the awkwardness of dealing with people who were useful but dull.

“He’ll be the kind that drops flat as a pancake after he’s been introduced, though he’s hot when you dip him. I took the last one round to seven girls, and he got through with them all in three sentences apiece,” moaned Owen.

“Poor boy!” said Olive. “Leave him to me to-night; I have n’t any partner.”

“That’s uncommon good in you. I’ll give you a lift now and then.”

Great was Olive’s amazement, an hour

later, to find that the cow-boy was a full-grown young man, a cross between a minister and a ranch-man. He was neither a Sam Jones Baptist nor a St. Matthew's Guild churchman. He looked more like a Toynbee Hall man,—as if he could live in a bad condition of things and yet be patient. He might be taken to a Washington diplomatic ball or to a Tremont Temple temperance meeting (as extremes meet), but not to the middle ground, in age and social capacity, of a dancing class.

What should she do? Her father had a funeral call to make that evening,—a never-to-be-procrastinated duty; and mamma,—she ought not to be depended upon because she was papa's wife. The visitor must be taken care of. Olive somehow felt herself accountable for his having a good time.

She held a private consultation with Owen on the subject, who understood the genus to which the stranger belonged better than did Olive.

“My dear,” said he, loftily, “Mr. Kimen is a fellow who had views and was ambitious, but was too dreamy to work for college honors, so he took to ranching and moral purposes. He is polite to cow-boys, calls by name his cattle on a thousand hills, but doesn’t know enough to give them salt. Ranching failed, and he has come back to live on his ancestors; but they are a mighty poor lot, for they never were in society. If you don’t mind having him sit by you to-night, it would do his soul good; he’s longing to see life.”

“How do you know anything about him, Owen? Perhaps he is only a Greenbacker, or a Prohibitionist, or an eight-hour labor reformer. A fellow has to be just your style or he won’t do.”

“I know him,” chuckled Owen, “by his shuffling walk, that weak mildness of his eye, and his respectful manners. Why, he called you ma’am! He is an incipient theo-

logical student, with not backbone enough to be a minister."

"Owen, I know he is sublime ; you sha' n't make fun of him."

"Oh yes, he could dance cotillons and swing you in the Virginia reel, but he can't comprehend the mazy, mystical german ; he'll go with you fast enough."

Olive shuddered. She had a horror of countrified nobility. She knew she ought to like it, but she could not make herself want to like it. Now she could do penance. As she was not engaged for that evening, she had decided not to run the risk of getting a partner when in the hall, but to wear her hat and sit on the narrow-cushioned settee in front of the draughty windows, where the fellows could come and talk to her if they would ; and if they did n't, she could chat with any damsel who happened to be forsaken. So she became a heroine, drew on her perfectly fitting yellow kids, which she felt Mr. Kimen

appreciate, and went down with him in the horse-car to the hall.

The dancing-school was, as far as society was concerned, the only one in a large city of four hundred thousand inhabitants. Not that only two or three hundred persons danced, but that all the rest of the people were out of society. Its master was a thorough gentleman, one who well knew the peculiarities of the city, but who never betrayed his knowledge, except in his division of the week into public and private afternoons and evenings. No one knew better than he just where each person was supposed to belong; and no one more quietly ignored this microscopic information concerning human pedigree than did he, giving his cordial personal esteem to those who deserved it. The noble order of matrons preserved him from the social penalties of liking whom he would, for on them rested the assignment of rank.

To be in one matron's class was no

guarantee that a pupil could be admitted into another; it depended entirely upon who was the matron. To be on the list did indeed render promotion probable; but woe to those matrons who dared admit some one a shade off color,—how quickly it was known!—and bliss to those who at last attained the goal of their wishes for their children! Parents who would have scorned the ascent of the social ladder for themselves, clung convulsively to its lowest rounds for the sake of their daughters, and would gladly have counted down their plebeian dollars to have gained admission for them. To the honor of the retail trade be it said, the nearest approach to a bribe ever made was when some commission merchant (not dealer), or some professional man, remarked to his wife, who was matron, “My dear, I know that girl’s father in a business way; he told me his wife was to apply to you.”

The inheritor of established social cus-

tom, but with a keen financial comprehension of the alliance between trade and fashion, eyed her husband, and admitted the daughter of the dealer in small wares, who did not go to the same day school with her own child, and who sat in the opposite aisle at church.

The true inwardness of admission could not be borne in upon the nerves until one was admitted. To be the child of a minister, lawyer, or banker did not of itself insure cordiality; it depended upon who was who. Then it was seen that only those mothers who knew the matrons well elsewhere, conversed freely with them in the hall; the rest exchanged the formalities of the season, and rehearsed among themselves the number of years, and of afternoons in a year, during which they had sat in the same seat while their daughters danced, and had never spoken to a certain neighbor on the same settee.

Oh, the exclusiveness resting not on

birth nor yet on dress, abiding not on money nor on fame, but on intangibility ; the most delicate aroma of gratified self-perceptions intermingling in a pot-pourri of carefully-nourished self-consciousnesses !

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DANCING-CLASS.

THE first evening the class opened, the social lines were grazed by the light breath of greeting. The matrons sat on the upper side of the hall. They were arrayed in that severe simplicity which betokened that this was a class, not a ball. Clusters of maidens and boys hovered round the separate doors of the ante-rooms. At last the procession began in squads or couplets; the girls with a shuffling step moved forward, shaking their draperies into place. The matrons watched the girls as they advanced. One came up cheerily; the matrons knew her and shook hands with her calmly. Another came, whose name could

not be recalled ; the matrons coldly bowed, and questioned one another's memory.

“Who admitted her? She was not on my list.”

The girl felt it, the next comer heard it, soon all were aware that the father of that special girl was an excellent man, who once had had dealings with the patrician husband of a matron ; that she was a good girl, and that her mother was a quiet woman whom no one knew. Then came another damsel, with that assurance of birth which makes its own welcome. She was received as an intimate friend, and told to bid her mother come and sit by the matrons. All the other ladies saw the person thus noticed cross the hall and take the proffered seat, and all bore it meekly. So the line filed on.

The opportunities of matrons ! In them was vested the power to guide the artificial or natural growth of these dancers into true womanhood. By their welcomes, by their

very smiles, they could make that hall into an arena of baffling feminine conventionalities, or of noble heart impulses and graceful courtesies.

Then came the shambling boys, each advancing on to the elbow of the other, some bowing at a distance of four yards, turning round, and disappearing into the dressing-room; others boldly approaching the seat of the dignitaries and bending forward with sophomoric elegance. Then there was a final rush of boys toward girls, which was intrepidly met by serried rows of smiling, waiting maidens. Each girl, hanging her left hand over the biceps of the boy's right shoulder, his right hand, with the handkerchief protector, touching with its finger-tips the middle of her back, the right and left hands of both meeting in outstretched diagonal lines, with the space of a foot between them, was hurried off in a frenzy called a glide, to the other end of the hall and back. The matrons

looked somewhat after the unpartnered girls, though rather by intimations to the gentlemanly instructor than by any direct introductions of their own, which might be compromising to themselves or embarrassing to the boys.

The class had met for several weeks. It was now Lent; some were absent from principle, apparently to the advantage of the others, for those who were away were the belles. As boys seldom have to conform to Church regulations, the numerical relation between the youth and the maids was not as disproportioned as usual.

Mr. Kimen had accepted Olive's invitation with secret pleasure, though he was not quite sure whether a dancing-class were a Baden-Baden or a Carlsbad-Waters kind of place. It was not Western. He had a fancy for watching faces. It was a pretty scene, — the simply tapestried hall, the polished floor, the brilliant lights, the soft dresses, and the youthful figures.

“Is it a Quaker or a Shaker dance first, that the boys and girls are standing in separate herds?” asked he.

“Ranch-like idea,” thought Olive, secretly; but outwardly she explained that it was due to propriety or to timidity. Then when the rush for the glide began, she waited for another simile. None came; he was too much amused with the incongruous politeness of the scene to venture any comment. The recurrent integrations and disintegrations of the german were to him involutions of disorder. He felt a divine compassion for the girls to whom the master dragged unwilling partners by constant shoves and hitches, and for those other girls who sat patiently while the popular ones were taken and they were left; and he recollected the words about the destruction of Jerusalem.

“They are used to it,” said Olive; “most of us learn to be wall-flowers, only some are quiet parasites of the chairs, while

others restlessly seek a partner with eyes or fan."

"How is the class made up?" inquired Mr. Kimen.

"'Made up!'" returned Olive, rather indignantly; "we don't make up classes, they grow. This is a private class; the matrons invite whom they choose to join it. It is just as private as if it were their own party in their own house, only those whom they invite are not yet out."

"'Out!' Miss Cadwallader; are they vexed?"

"Oh!" replied she, merrily, "you thought I meant put out! I mean, we don't come out till next winter; we are buds, and it would not do for us to come here without matrons. They are very particular, for we are under their charge, and they must know all about a girl before they admit her. It is generally their friends' children who come; but sometimes some one applies whom they don't know,

and then, if they find out she's a nice girl, they take her in. It is the character of the girl which decides it, they say; but you know that's an adjustable word."

Evidently Olive retained her childish way of exhausting a subject before she stopped speaking.

"I suppose all your friends belong to it," observed Mr. Kimen.

"No, indeed. Some of them grumble, but it is very shoddy in them to do so. The matrons are always kind, and get us partners sometimes, and give us little hints when we glide too fast, or don't stand up straight enough in the waltz; and we girls feel protected, for they would not let anything happen. If our mothers can't come, we can go to the matrons; they treat us all alike, only they are kindest to the wall-flowers, which makes them feel like orphans."

Olive had grown so eager in her defence of abused matrons, that she had been overheard by her neighbor, who muttered, —

“It is all very well to talk so when you are on the list, but when you are n’t, a matron is a sphinx; you can’t learn why you are rejected. It is always the other matron who did it.”

“What is it makes a belle?” was another of Mr. Kimen’s leading questions.

“I don’t know,” replied Olive. “Some say it is figure, or good dancing, or knowing how to talk, or being pretty,—but it is n’t that last. Mamma says it is the power of circumscribed adaptation; she means a girl adapts herself to small people, not to causes.”

There was not a girl in the hall who did not know that Olive was having a better time than if she were dancing. In the dressing-room they crowded round her and plied her with questions. All she knew, was, that her companion was or had been a ranch-man and was a friend of papa’s,—through the parish somehow. In her secret heart she wondered if Mr. Kimen

were going to be another Phillips Brooks, or a leader of a Chautauqua Assembly.

Owen came home in ecstasy. He had led the german, and led it with the acknowledged belle of the winter, who had been taken out all the time, so that he had had opportunity to flit from girl to girl, lighting on the vacant chairs as if he were an exhausted yet self-perpetuating sacrifice, fanning briefly the occupants of the seats, examining their cards interrogatively (he rarely committed himself), and then leaving with benignity.

CHAPTER IX.

EQUALITY.

AT breakfast the next morning Mr. Cadwallader observed, —

“Olive, Mr. Kimen is not a believer in some of your theories; he has n’t much faith in ambition and embroidery, and he even doubts about philanthropy.”

Owen bestowed upon his father that patronizing smile with which quick-witted youth greet the attempts of their seniors to be jocose; he winked one eye at his sister, — the eye the visitor could not see, — as much as to say, “Humbug!” and asked Mr. Kimen if he were an evolutionist.

“Oh,” interposed Olive, whose kindness of heart always made her sensitive to the embarrassment of leading questions, and who

recognized too well the difficulty of starting general conversation to be willing to lose any point of commencement for it, "let us take him to the 'Shelter and Exercise Yard for Cats,' to cure his doubt."

"And to the public schools, to show him the futility of ambition," added Owen, penitently.

"What is it about cats?" inquired Mr. Kimen.

"It is a Befriending Committee, and they give cats and dogs the same soup that the French peasants eat, but it works like the Southern alligators, — Northern market stocked with purses and shoes of those creatures; few of them living round New Orleans wharves in consequence, so rats rejoice and combine, and levees are undermined."

"But cats!" said Mr. Kimen; "I don't see the connection."

"Why, boys with bean-blowers have lost their occupation; the price of traps has

risen as cats have disappeared and mice increased."

The guest looked thoughtful, and inquired meekly, "Is there the same correspondence between the schools and ambition?"

"Public schools, yes," replied Owen, with scornful emphasis on the word public. "They have destroyed simplicity; I was brought up in them, and know. We always perorated on Washington, and wrote on the advantages of one term, so as to give the spoils all round, as each graduate has got to be President; that is what common schools are for, — to protest against Civil Service Reform. Education is no longer for inward, private uses, but to make us get up and get on. Every girl is going to be a professor; no one will be left to be taught. It is a 'first-class circus.'"

"Your slang stands in contrast to your sense," remarked his mother.

“Oh, one is premature and the other is a boy’s vernacular, eh, Mr. Kimen?”

“I shall leave the cats to themselves,” replied he, rather offended with Owen’s ease, and anxious to guide the conversation for his own information; “but there must be chance for some noble work in the schools, — wrong ideas to correct, uses of moral education to instil! Are the private schools as bad?” His voice grew emphatic; Owen stared, but his self-confidence was never at a loss for reply, — satisfactory to himself at least.

“Oh, all the society fellows go to them, and no kind of a girl goes to a public school. It is n’t right, though. It makes feeling, and starts us as snobs. In colleges it is different. The Beck Hall fellows have not any feeling against the grinds. Schools are not managed right yet.”

“‘He who wants a horse without a fault, may go afoot,’” observed Jac-mamma, quietly.

“But, Madam,” expostulated the guest, “‘every fox has to take care of its own tail.’”

Owen’s respect for the visitor instantly increased. He had retorted on his mother’s argument with her own weapon. With a deprecatory look at Olive, Mr. Kimen inquired of her whether the mania for embroidery were weakening womankind. If Mr. Kimen had gained with Owen, he instantly lost with Olive. She replied severely that aprons, breads, pickles, and jellies were taking its place at women’s exchanges, but that in decorative art rooms its value was estimated by architects.

“Are not both depots for products?” he asked in note-book manner.

Olive was in despair. Only one who had been on a ranch could so confuse an institution to help woman with a society for impersonal artistic development. How could she explain the difference to one who did not feel it?

Mr. Kimen became confused in his turn. Having lived some time in the West, his earnestness had grown at the expense of his subtlety. He had become convinced that life itself was noble and grand, only its emphases had been wrongly placed. As Owen had shrewdly guessed, he had abandoned ranching as not enabling him to do his part in solving social problems, and had returned to bring his fresh thought to the effete East. Olive meant something by her words. Was it reproof?

Owen was an enigma also, for the slang in his colloquialism did not hide the lurking conventionalism of his spirit. Yet this was a minister's house, where he had expected to find that life was conducted on a real basis! He made one more attempt to understand the difference between woman and art.

"Does n't womankind — I mean working-girls, — don't they need to be helped?" he asked.

“No more than manhood—working-men, and cattle-dealers need to be helped,” was the quick reply.

“Olive!” spoke her father, warningly.

She paid no heed to him ; her indignation roused, she continued eagerly, —

“It is just like you men to think women are different from men, and that working-girls are different from women. You are always classifying by names, but have not the articles ready for your labels. It is like all the public-school talk about being equal. That is what spoils the exchanges. We are not all equal, and we don’t want to be. It is demoralizing to be equal. What we want is to be recognized for just what we are, — you as shop-girl, I as young lady. Shop-girls don’t want things done for them ; they know how to be their own presidents and secretaries, and can manage their committees without our benevolence. We are always following out our own ideas in helping them, and thinking they ought to wear

our old hair-ribbons, when they prefer to buy long horn hairpins with a glass ball at the end. I think we might just try to make them happy, instead of bothering them by trying to improve them."

"Olive, dear, that is just what you do with your cash-girls," said her mother, soothingly.

"I know, mamma. It is because you let me have them in my own room; if we had to meet at a charity bureau or a vestry, we should have an improvement committee after us. All I mean is, that if Mr. Kimen has come here to do good, he had best find out first what is being done in things which don't get into reports; and that shop-girls don't need peculiar treatment any more than he does himself."

"Olive!" said her father, this time sternly.

Owen patted her shoulder approvingly.

"I beg your pardon," returned Olive, turning to Mr. Kimen as she left the table.

The young man rose and bowed with true humility before her avenging spirit. She held out her hand, and as he clasped it like a cattle-dealer he felt his own earnestness tempered by her girlish grace. The little pantomime brought peace. Mrs. Cadwallader never apologized for her children nor explained them to others. She had too much regard for their personality to do either one or the other.

Mr. Kimen found enough opportunity, as self-elected inspector, to examine more charities than he had ever dreamed of as existing in one city. Private funds had been left for every kind of philanthropic device, — all tied up in a way which created a perpetual embargo upon the future, and taxed legal ingenuity to devise it. In charitable and educational movements he beheld an inordinate ambition. No one seemed to be doing anything for the sake of happiness, even in efforts at industrial education. Children were not taught for

the sake of present or future enjoyment, but that they could become contractors or "bosses." It was power, reputation, more than money, for which each one strove.

In the women's meetings he attended he heard exhortations to make the most of one's self; to make one's influence recognized; to become a type of the new woman. To be sure, it was to be and do all this for the sake of influencing men, but not on the old ground of pleasing them; the new "kingdom come" was to improve them.

He heard of the elevation of the poor in their homes, and pondered on elevated railroads. Registration was another hobby or necessity. Records of births, deaths, incomes, number of children, occupations, presents received and given, big and little virtues, all were kept in volumes. Everything was on the composite photograph plan; the individual had given place to the race. His own life had been haunted by infinite compassion for the last man,

when the elements should melt with fervent heat; now he saw that the individual was already ingulfed, and that the whole race was painlessly becoming an abstraction in tabular statement. If this were not wholly true, it was true that a great *ought* stood imprinted on the face of all those who were trying to help mankind. Kant's categorical imperative was embodied in its most authoritative form. He hoped to be urged by it to greater effort, but he became inert and enjoyed his daily meals. Without being aware of it, he was relieved when no one tried to be brilliant or instructive, but all were natural and contented.

Innocent jokes, stale puns, and chirping humor are less fatiguing than lofty platitudes or a sense of conscious effort. Having lost happiness by morbid design, we must now cultivate it as an art, and seek health as its appendage.

CHAPTER X.

THE CLUB.

ONE evening as Mr. Kimen sat in his room he heard such bubbles of laughter as young girlhood alone emits.

“Olive and her cash-girls,” explained Owen. “If you choose, you can stand athwart the entry, look obliquely into the transom, and see all that goes on. Ten cents a show! I’ve let it out to the boys and made lots.”

By the aid of his own ears, Owen’s illustrations, and one fleeting glance, Mr. Kimen obtained a rather clear idea of the affair. The Game Club was composed of eight or nine little thin cash girls and boys. The rules of admission for girls applied to hair; those who used “fluffy Fedoras”,

could not enter. It met every week, and had two hours of games interspersed with such literary exercises as “consequences” and “shouting cities,” with quiet intervals of progressive checkers and jackstraws. Once a month each one read or spoke a piece of poetry; quite often it was original, and gave glimpses of an inner life; as follows: —

“The sun art an angel of God,
The moon art an angel of God,
The stars art an angel of God,
And all those who dwell in the house of God,
And all those who dwell in the sight of God,
Dwell in the soul of God:
And all those who dwell in the soul of God
Are the children, the men, and the angels of God.”

It was in simple ways that Olive made the children happy. When asked why she succeeded, she answered, —

“It is boys, — co-education in fun. We are not wishing for boys when we have them; and then they go home with the girls.”

She had a little lending library for them,

from which stories about poor girls becoming remarkable women were carefully excluded. Earlier, Olive had made herself wretched by trying to be what she could not be; and she was determined that these girls should not be exposed to biographical temptation. Books about the American Revolution and about girls and boys who lived on farms and grew up and married each other and located permanently, Miss Martineau's ever-fresh tales of political economy, "Alice in Wonderland," "Liliput Levee," and "Liliput Lectures" were important favorites. From her love of the last two Olive dated her own liking for poetry and her interest in the happiness of the masses, as she laughingly called all those whom she wanted to become like her other self, her ideal, which haunted her with its dim possibilities of beauty and power.

The Club was learning to deal with many a social problem by discussing proverbs,—such as "Paddle your own canoe;" "He

who holds the ladder is as bad as the burglar;" "If you let them lay the calf on your back, they'll soon slap on the cow." They applied these mottoes to their own circumstances and to newspaper occurrences. More than once had Owen and his comrades, outside the transom, unconsciously stopped to think of the confused condition of things in which the concerns of one is neither exclusively the affair of himself alone, nor necessarily the affair of all.

Olive's personal labors were chiefly devoted to the child who poetized on the saints and the angels. She thought he was not sufficiently healthy-minded, for he was constantly in fear of doing what was wrong. In spite of her praise, his own self-estimate was so despairing that once, when they were alone together, she ventured to remind him of the beatitude about "the poor in spirit." He started, exclaiming, "It is all wrong, Miss Olive, you don't know nothing about it; being lowly and

humble-minded is just being in hell. I wish I could be conceited, then I should be happier."

The room in which the meetings were held gave indications of its owner. Her bureau had a clear space on one side of the enormous pincushion, where she laid her German grammar or her geometry that she might study while dressing. On the be-ribboned structure were stuck all kinds of pins, — scarf-pins of an old English watch-cock and an Indian arrow-head, of a bird's claw and a silver wing; bonnet-pins of a moonstone and a rhinestone, of an enamelled pansy and a jewelled butterfly. A blue wedgwood spike, one of Miss Curtis's gifts from her family estate, was laden with bracelets of diminishing width, — bangles of hooks and eyes, of spiral springs, of jingling oxidized medallions, which told the story of the "house that Jack built." Her looking-glass was wreathed with photographs of her friends. On her table

stood upright sheets of Japanese-silk-covered pasteboard, with circles, oblongs, and squares cut into it, which framed the faces of those for whom she cared little. Her work-basket was very small, with some fine cambric in it for her father's cravats; it looked like a previous bonbonnière.

Her desk was large and antique, full of cubby-holes filled with paper and envelopes of every kind, from the stylish, heavy, plain sort, with her address stamped in straight red letters, to the ragged-edged parchment with its spreading monogram. Over her mantel-piece was the photograph of Müller's Madonna,—the ideal she wished to help some one else to realize, as it was beyond her personal reach.

If Olive had been less healthy or less brave, her longings for her ideal might have made her morbid or sentimental; as it was, she lived in a home where action bore an equal part in life with thought. She had learned to have patience and trust,

and to wait for old age or immortality to assure the daily strivings of her girlish heart.

Her abounding faith in immortality as the outgrowth of necessity, as the perfect flower of freedom, was the most beautiful part of the girl's life. She was so sure of it. It gave her infinite comfort. It made her triumphantly happy. It enabled her to make others contented; not that she talked of it, but that they caught its inspiration from her bright voice, her springing step, the pretty toss of her head. All was life, forever life, with her. Even her brother's conventionality, that now warped him, mellowed in her thought into the arch-angelic grace of heaven, which would make him tender to the little boys dying in the public schools.

CHAPTER XI.

EARNESTNESS.

MR. KIMEN and Olive could not agree. He was always earnest; life was a serious thing with him.

“Will you go to the theatre with me?” he begged of her; for he acknowledged that the stage had a moral mission of its own to fulfil.

“What to see?” inquired Olive, evasively.

“Would it not be a good plan to see ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin,’ that we might realize what were the horrors of slavery, and feel the grandeur of those men who fought against it?”

“No,” replied she, “I won’t. I don’t go to the theatre as ‘a good plan,’ but for fun. Will you go to ‘Iolanthe’?”

“Pardon me ; but except for the pleasure of being with you, could not the time be spent in some better way? Have you a headache?” he added as he saw her put her hand over her forehead.

“Do you always take things so in earnest?” asked Olive, merrily. “I just wanted to keep my waves in place, the wind blows so, and I used up my last bit of lace.”

“‘Waves’?” exclaimed Mr. Kimen, looking in every direction.

“Oh, you never were a girl, you never had a sister,” she returned almost contemptuously ; but changing into the tone of mock solemnity she often adopted with him, she added, “yes, waves, — water-waves of my hair.”

He supposed he had made a mistake, but how was it possible when life was so real! Yet he had begun to recognize that it was very difficult to keep his mind on institutions when Olive was also in his thoughts.

Unconsciously she was showing him the futility of his deductions. Neither of them went to the theatre. Each was annoyed at the other's dramatic preference.

In Mrs. Cadwallader's presence Mr. Kimen felt soothed. He was the son of an old friend of hers. His mother had been one of those women who are always putting off their sons to a convenient time because of housework. When honors were not added to his college degree, she felt defrauded of her right to his distinction as her son. He had passed his four years trusting that at their end he should know what he wanted to do; believing that meanwhile, by not having a fixed purpose, his view of education would be broadened. After his graduation he hovered in choice between the ministry and the pursuit of sociology. He much preferred being a civic missionary to any perils of foreign cannibalism; but he also considered that the religion of the future embraced the

propagation of political economy. He must study humanity before divinity.

His father became impatient with his sincere indecision, and sent him off on a ranch, hoping that in out-of-door life his spasmodic enthusiasms would become practical. Established there, he had spent more time arguing with cow-boys on the perversity of the will and the power of kindness over cattle, than was profitable for his business. The snowy peaks of the Sierras, the inaccessible gorges, and the nestling clouds had wrought upon his dreamy purposes, until he longed to go back to the cities and bring the people up to visions of human loveliness, if not of mountain grandeur.

The power of language was borne in upon him ; he stumbled in its utterance, for his thought was less clear than his general intentions. He had not physical strength to win the triumphs of a platform orator. He relied on unseen spiritual

forces to rouse the consciences of a parish. He had become that uncomfortable product of himself, — a dead-in-earnest man.

When away from Olive, he was very anxious that she should develop properly (he had no idea what he meant, but the phrase strengthened his desire). When with her, he was conscious of his own outward defects, and that she never had time to become aware of his inward purposes. Once in the pulpit, however, he might be able to help her; which he ventured to intimate one Sunday morning as they walked to church.

If he had expressed this hope in the early days of their acquaintance, Olive could not have understood him. For a long time she had seen him, at first daily and then weekly, for he had gone to a neighboring Divinity School; now she had begun to comprehend the moral earnestness of the man, — so comically like her own, so different in its want of vivacity. Therefore she

answered quietly, trying to suppress her amused indignation:—

“You think sermons reach us girls! It is partly so, but it is more the ‘extempore listening’ we do, as Mr. Fordher calls it. Some sentence hits us and off we go on our own thoughts, which are like small shot in the way they take the conceit out of us. The ministers start it, but we do the rest.”

“According to you, you could easily get along without us! Of what use are we?” asked Mr. Kimen, despairingly.

Olive almost stopped on the muddy street-crossing. It was so vexing to talk to a man who gave a personal bearing to things by his tones if not by his words.

“‘Use?’” she exclaimed. “Why, a real minister, who is better than we are, who is elegant and powerful in his manners, and who has got the soul of the world in him, and can bear the burden of the nations, and take it away like the paschal lamb from wearing out the rest of us,—

why, he is like Browning and the Bible put together, and we grow better every minute, and —”

She paused, for they were near the church door. When would she ever learn to express herself properly and not say too much, she thought as she took her seat in the pew. Mr. Kimen felt encouraged; he had read “Rabbi Ben Ezra” to her the other evening, and she had embroidered all the time.

Mr. Kimen had become a great favorite with Miss Curtis, or rather he was a favorite study of hers. She perhaps felt a tenderness toward him. He was genuinely good, and it refreshed her. She gave him a great deal of crisp advice, which hurt his feelings but ought to benefit him.

Miss Curtis seldom went to church since exchanges had gone out of fashion. In the first years of Mr. Cadwallader’s settlement she had been a regular attendant; but having learned the general trend of

his ideas, the novelty of hearing him wore away. Every Sunday morning he sent her his text, upon which she meditated from the point of view she assumed he would take, and from her own. In the afternoon she sewed for poor children. It had become a custom for Olive to break the silence and monotony of Miss Curtis's Sabbath by lunching with her; Mr. Cadwalader was thus enabled to take a long spiritual nap, while his wife enjoyed the two hours of absolute freedom it gave her; in which, with curtains drawn and door locked, she fondly pored over her bureau drawers.

They lived directly opposite to Miss Curtis. In the earlier years of their residence they were under the constant constraint of that lady's inspection. Life moves in grooves everywhere, and Miss Curtis had grown to know what ought to happen at each hour, even if it did n't, so that her vigilance was relaxed. When she perceived that

Mr. Kimen's presence at the Cadwalladers' was likely to become as regular as the Sabbathical recurrence of baked beans and brown bread, she decided that it was best for him to lunch with her on that day, but at a different hour from Olive's visit to her. This arrangement was full of peculiar satisfaction to her, for it gave her more to do and hear, and also the pleasure of feeling that it annoyed Mr. Kimen, who hoped each week to meet Olive there and every time was disappointed. She enjoyed watching him wander through the long rooms and entries, his expectant look when the doors creaked, and the change on his face when the waitress entered. Under Olive's influence she had given up all malignancy to such an extent that this harmless chance to revert to her old way of planning disappointment for people was clutched by her, much to Olive's delight in this case.

Miss Curtis also enjoyed contrasting her-

self as she was with Olive, with what she was with Mr. Kimen. It was like holding a reception with herself. With him, she was aphoristic and advisory; with the girl, she was confidential and submissive. She always had some feminine delicacy for Olive which she denied him. At one of their favorite repasts of Scotch marmalade and Irish moss blanc-mange, the conversation strayed back to the former days of their neighborhood acquaintance.

“Do you remember,” said Olive, “your first call on mamma, when you asked her why so many young ladies came to the house Wednesdays, and so many old ladies Tuesday afternoons? She explained to you that they were papa’s Bible classes. Then in that funny, questioning way of yours of stating a fact when you really don’t know anything about it, you told her papa’s fees must be considerable, as so many missionary-looking men and women came to be married on Thursdays. Mamma

said they were sewing-circle people, don't you remember?"

"Oh yes, child. I recollect it well enough. Do you know what next I asked?"

Olive shook her head.

"Well, I remarked to your mother that she did a good deal of sewing for one with a weak back. She apologized by saying she had a machine. It really was n't any excuse, for she ought to have done less if she had a machine; but some women are such females!" Miss Curtis's foot tapped the floor vexatiously. "I did n't like her answer, and thought she had best know in the beginning how I felt; so I just went on and told her that it was a good thing, — it saved salary, making her husband's shirts, but that she ought n't to stop at the bosoms; that I had noticed, — that is, I had seen through the windows, — that she bought them all stitched. Do you know, I got a new pair of glasses just to find that out. Did n't your mother tell you?"

Again Olive shook her head.

"I suppose," returned Miss Curtis, "that she did not think it ladylike in me to do it, nor in her to tell of it. Are you going to be ladylike and lose your identity? Ladies always have to give it up."

"Never," said Olive with a shudder.

"Salaried people have to be ladylike. Marry an income, Olive, not a salary, then you can do as you choose in manners. I always did advise your mother, but it is all along of a piece with my telling her, when she was going to have her first convention to tea, that she'd find lobster salad went further than chicken salad, 'cause most people did n't eat it; and she went and had salmon salad! I make up for it now, when I —"

"Is it you," said Olive, as a flash of illumination darted through her mind, — "you always made us think it was some one else, — but is it you who send us a big dinner every Anniversary week?"

Miss Curtis nodded and snapped her eyes.

“Yes, it’s I; for when I saw that your father didn’t invite cathedral preachers only, but took the country ones, who are sent to the Legislature and who know a potato from a sermon, and that he fed them on veal, which is particularly depressing meat, I was afraid his salary could not afford cheerful food; so I told the butcher to send him salmon, a sirloin, asparagus, and strawberries, enough for a collation, the last Friday of every May.”

“What would you have done, aunt, if you’d been a woman minister and had a salary?”

“I’d only have been one when I’d had a fixed income from telephone stock. A salary from people’s liking you, eked out by wedding fees from grooms who don’t know the minister, but whose brides go to Bible classes, and by appreciative funeral fees from the family because the deceased

liked you, is the miserablest kind of independence. Olive, there is Mr. Kimen crossing the street; he has been to your father's in nap-time, and he is coming here ten minutes before his hour. He has seen you at the window; now just go out and home the back way as fast as you can. He'll be out of sorts; but I can't have my house a providential propinquity for you two."

"Aunt Curtis, he's dreadful, he is so good. He makes me feel like a sermon. Jac-mamma calls him an over-fatigued conscience."

CHAPTER XII.

MAKING FIRES.

MISS CURTIS'S days were full. She rose early and made her matinal cup of bromo herself, in an old-fashioned ætna, for she abominated the modern kerosene toilet cooking-stoves, or lamps. Then she busied herself with her immense correspondence. Her writing-table was not cumbered with that useless bric-à-brac which indicates society letter-writing. Her father's ink-horn, a bunch of quill pens, a sharp heavy penknife, and a piece of cloth for a pen-wiper were its accessories. On the table rested two plain walnut cases of shelves for letters and papers, labelled, "Beggars," "Pedlers," "Townspeople," "Strangers," "Friends," "Business," which showed the variety of her work.

Beggars were people who asked for money without regard to the propriety of the request. Pedlers were those who offered some feeble exchange, like a triple mortgage on a run-out farm, or a third of the proceeds of some patent concerning which there was already a lawsuit, for the bounty which it was assumed she would bestow. The alternative of choice was not vouchsafed her.

She made her own investments, and only had recourse to brokers as a necessity between her and exchange of stocks. She relied upon her own knowledge, justified by newspaper reading; and certainly she was as well informed as many of those who purchase a seat at the brokers' board.

She never worked in any organization. She called committees bags of wind, time-wasting contrivances, and was too afraid of her temper to expose herself to the trying personal experiences which work with others necessitates. People were too

afraid of her peculiarities to ask her to be president of anything; but there was not a society in town which had not desired her name as vice-president.

“They want me to leave them something,” she said to Olive. “If it weren’t for the annual subscriptions, I’d join them all and leave them nothing. They would cure their disappointment by holding fairs.”

Miss Curtis’s aid was given to individuals on grounds of personal knowledge. If occasionally deceived, her examination of the next petitioner was severer. It was her favorite declaration that she had never helped a girl to get an education who was limber in mind or body and threatened to break down.

“Mathematics and clear-starching,” she asserted, “don’t go together any more than light housework and schools of oratory. It is all folly, — working your passage when you are getting an education. Girls in my day were educated to be missionaries or

mothers ; now they are taught to take in dramatic expression and write parlor lectures, when encyclopædias are as common as Bibles."

At ten o'clock Miss Curtis was ready to receive calls from beneficiaries ; after lunch she walked, read, and slept ; in the evening she visited the families of those whom she helped. She could judge better of human nature in the dishabille of home life than in the dress uniform of shop or factory existence. Besides, men, if there were any, were then likely to be about ; and she never thought she knew a woman until she had observed her ways with a man. She frequently took little journeys to compare the results of her own investigations with the letters she received petitioning for her kindness. She would have made an invaluable State Visitor on the Commission of Lunacy and Charity ; for she had been known to ride all night that she might arrive at some village as the

sun was rising, and surprise a beneficiary farmer doing his chores as he ought, or else find him unpunctual for the lowing cows.

One morning Olive found her unusually annoyed. "What is the matter, aunt?" she questioned.

"Because people can't see when they should get out of a scrape. As if, after forty years of studying character, I am going to give in! It all comes from that philandering Jane. She knew my terms, and she ought to have laid them down to him herself; but she told her man to come and see me. I sha'n't budge one inch; he has got to do it, or they'll have none of my money."

At that moment the door opened and a well-dressed mechanic entered, rather sleek in appearance, as if just out of the barber's hands.

Miss Curtis became stern.

"The top of the morning to you this

swate day ; and it is mesel that hopes I am not intruding," said he.

"It is time some folks were at work, sir," returned Miss Curtis.

"An' shure it's my boss is swearing for me now ; but as we wants to be married to-night, I just made bold to call on your ladyship now, by your swate lave."

"What prevents you?" asked Miss Curtis, grimly.

"An' shure, my lady," continued he, blandly, — "an' shure 't is to yersel we were looking for the rint of the little house and the pigsty ; an' shure it's Jane will be bringing you such swate milk ; an' shure —"

"I want none of your goings on," interrupted Miss Curtis. "She told you," said the lady, pointing to Jane, who stood sheepishly in the doorway, "that if you look to me for the rent, you've got to follow my rules and make the fire every morning, winter and summer, before you go to your work. None of my girls can marry a man

who won't promise that ; for if the laziness is in him, this will take it out."

"An' shure, ma'am, if you'll let me swear it by your lovely sel', I'll make it every morning ; but if you make me swear by all the holy saints, it's mesel as would n't like to take such liberties. And thin, Miss Curtis, my old 'ooman, as is one of the blessed saints now, was partickerly cross about the lengths of wood ; and Jane here might want her wood two fit long 'stead of three fit length."

"I don't see what wood two or three foot long has to do with the matter ; all you have got to do is to put it in the stove and make it burn," said Miss Curtis.

"An' shure, ma'am, it's yer quick sel' that's got jist to the pint o' ower peck of trouble. Shure as you are alive, ma'am, I done all my part like a true widower that I be, an' got in a nice set o' mortgagee furniture, an' they bees all coming to-night to greet her ; and when shes gets the

cooking-stove, it 's Saint Patrick himsel' 'll show her to make the fire."

"Mortgaged furniture!" almost screamed Miss Curtis.

"An' shure, ma'am, it 's our mootool wages as 'll pay for it. We jist axes you to pay the rint, and thin we 'll settle about the wood and the fire our two sel's."

"I told you, Pat Riley, that I ain't a going to buy that stove. I spent all I set out to, and cheerful like too, and that 's an end on 't!" exclaimed Jane.

"My fax! if yees going to be that cross ower a kitchen fire, I would n't marry yer, letting alone the pig."

"Are you going to make the kitchen fire, or not?" demanded Miss Curtis.

"An' faith, ma'am, you pit a poor fellow on his marriage night in a tight place. It 's mesel as would do that, an' more, for the sake of an old lady like yersel; but when it comes to doing it reg'lar for the sakes o' a creeter you've been so good as to

marry, be jabbers! I don't want to swear to it."

"Go along wid yer. I'll send for my flour and things to-night; you sha 'n't have me nor them. I'm no better than a creeter! Go 'long, I tell yer!" screamed Jane.

The man bounced out of the room. Jane sat down, threw her apron over her head, and rocked herself back and forth, crying, —

"Oh the mean, nasty thing! oh the canting Irishman! oh the deceitful sweet-heart! oh, my! oh, land! oh, Jerusalem—salem—em!"

Miss Curtis walked up to her, pulled down the apron, and jerked up her head, saying, —

"Jane, you are a fool now. You would have been a squaw if you had married him. Go home and send for your flour."

CHAPTER XIII.

SNOBBISHNESS.

OLIVE was not faultless, and in spite of her compassion for Miss Curtis, and her appreciation of the blue depths of the sapphire ring which that lady had given her, there were times when she inwardly rebelled at the exercise of her friend's guardianship. It seemed as if her judgment was being tested, and her actions weighed, with a view to future results, instead of letting each trifling event be its own justification. Perhaps it was because Miss Curtis was very lonely, notwithstanding her beneficence, that she longed to expose her threescore years and more to the contagion of youth.

In her mother's presence Olive was at

ease. With her she could differ, argue, plead, or be silent. They two were never afraid of being on the brink of a conflict, — the fear that disintegrates friendship. Yet both of them recognized that their mutual relations were undergoing that subtle change by which alone grown-up children and parents can live together freely.

Now that Olive was partially released from fixed hours of school life, she found her mother's interpretation of being "out in society" meant having time to do for other people. Olive thought it should also include having time for one's self, and for the amenities of life. There were many little unæsthetic appointments of the house and the table which the daughter, as she was almost "out," wanted changed, and which the mother wished should remain as they were, in virtue of her husband's limited income.

"Maggie ought to wait on table better," said Olive. "It is part of the contract."

"She has n't time to do everything," replied Mrs. Cadwallader.

"Well, this ought to be done, anyway. I can see why she does not want to classify herself with a white cap, but I don't see why she can't hand the plates, instead of our helping ourselves across the breakfast-table. I could get more out of her than you do, if you would only let me try," reasoned Olive.

"Because you must have occupation, must I lose it?" asked her mother.

"Oh, Jac-mamma!" exclaimed the girl, throwing her arms around her mother's neck, "I don't want to turn you out; but I care for pretty effects, and you care for philosophic, long views. You have brought me up on them; now let me educate you on pleasing trifles."

"Agreed, if you leave Maggie time enough for the laundry-work of your brother's wardrobe; he, too, makes modern demands upon his home."

“That’s like you, mamma ; you always accept the inevitable. Owen and I are modern, you are antique simplicity ; modern life is so complex that we must arrange for division of forces.”

“A mother’s puzzle is to make her daughter greater without being less herself. Neither your self-respect nor mine must increase by either of us losing respect for the other.”

“Never fear, mamma ! A daughter can only grace what you dignify.”

It was thus that conflict between the two was often parried.

The aspect of the home did change insensibly. The tall haircloth rocking-chair became covered with plush, though it stood in the way just as much as ever. An occasional water-color replaced the scriptural engravings which made the house so suggestive of its owner’s calling. The little reception-room lost its prim, committee look, and glowed with the color of Madras

curtains held back by a wealth of ribbon. The dining-room regulations grew more leisurely, and the *menu* acquired a less semi-weekly character.

“Mrs. Cadwallader seems to have grown as young-looking as her daughter,” said the sewing-circle. No one could add that the child had grown as old as her parent.

Neither mother nor daughter ever planned to enjoy the companionship of sewing, the rock on which so much domestic happiness founders. That little phrase, “Bring your sewing into my room and let’s talk,” has been more productive of being rubbed the wrong way than of any pleased domestic purring. If there were sewing to be done, it was often done with each other, but it was never resorted to as an expedient for enjoying each other’s society.

The best hours of the intercourse between Olive and her mother were the after-talks, when “a little company” was over, or

the girl had returned from dancing. Olive learned from these chats that the most high-bred tact is the same as keen sympathy, and that to manage people is the art of managing one's self ; and more than all, she saw that the old proverb, " With time and patience the mulberry-leaf becomes satin," teaches the gift of social adjustment.

As a matter of course Olive danced well and enjoyed the glide polka as if she were wheeling through chaos into the millenium; yet she had never forgotten her childish agonies of disappointment at her own limitations. They made her now on the lookout for others who were perched on the fence of self-consciousness, and endeavor to bring them within the field of contentment and self-forgetfulness.

Next to making a forlorn girl happy, she enjoyed snubbing a presumptuous youth.

It was the last evening of the subscription parties. She had teased the dress-maker until her dress fitted without a

wrinkle, and, starting from the copse of her bustle, fell in long, willowy lines around her feet. She wished she were to have some one else than Rob Royce for a partner. He was one of those unfortunate fellows to whom girls will not engage themselves beforehand, but whom they will accept at the last moment if they can get no one else. In a spurt of generosity Olive had some weeks ago promised herself to him for this evening. That he might prove to all beholders that this had been a prearranged concession on her part, he sent her three dozen Jacqueminot roses at fifty cents apiece. She put them on the tea-table as a centre ornament, and left them there.

The german had begun, when Olive's quick eye perceived a stranger sitting alone most of the time, while her partner industriously took out the pretty girls. The new-comer was economically overdressed. Her attire at once excited sympathy and

told the story of scant means and maternal love, and the endeavor to make the narrow breadths of her mother's yellowish-white wedding gown into the full draperies of the present day. The waist was so tight that it looked crabbed; the skirts were so tight that they resembled a Quaker pin-cushion. Out of the dress rose a quiet, demure little face, which spoke of simple pleasures and honest gratitude.

"Who is that girl?" asked Olive of her partner.

"It is a Miss Spark; she is not in our set, you know."

"How did she come here, then? Do you know her?"

"Hardly; I just met her once. She is n't in society."

"She is here," claimed Olive.

"Oh, it is some one Mrs. Tory has taken up, as she is always doing. Society is so mixed, you know; such girls can't expect to have anything but a quiet time, even if

Mrs. Tory gets them partners. She is the matron, and is such a 'swell' herself she can afford to invite any one."

"That is an advantage most of us lack," was the quick response. "We'll take her out in the naming figure, and that will give you a chance to introduce me."

Royce looked at her amazed, but the faint twinkle in her eye reminded him that it was only through her intercession that he, living in Charlestown, had been put on the manager's list. Besides, she had not carried his flowers. She might have told the girls about them, and then they would laugh at him; he knew it was not good taste to have sent so many, only he had wanted to show that if he set out to do a thing he could carry it through. Ought he to mention the flowers, and say in a careless tone that perhaps she preferred Marechal Neil roses? What did fellows do who were not brought up to that kind of thing? On the whole, he

concluded it was wiser not to allude to them, and not to object to anything Miss Cadwallader wished.

All this reasoning had lasted no longer than the gleam in her eye, when he bowed silently and led her up to Miss Spark, introducing her.

“Let us take you out,” said Olive in her easy manner. “You know Mr. Royce must take us both up to another gentleman. Which will you be, oranges or lemons?”

“Oranges,” answered Miss Spark, springing up in delight.

Royce carried them to Pat Green, who chose lemons and whirled off Olive. Royce took a short turn round the hall with Miss Spark, and conducted her to her seat with gravity.

Soon after Olive took a second young man up to Miss Spark. When the little world of society saw that the one of unknown antecedents had met with recognition, all the rest gladly gave it; soon

it was discovered that Miss Spark's ancestors had fought at Bunker Hill.

Olive told Miss Curtis about the incident. That lady indexed it in her note-book under the heading, "Snobs," as a guide for her judgment in case Mr. Royce should ever become a petitioner for her alms-giving, or she should read about him in the newspapers.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONVENTIONALITY.

BREAKFAST was late the next morning, or rather the meal was punctual but the family were irregular. When Owen jerkingly shoved himself into the room, by going first to the right and then to the left until he reached his seat, he found his mother opening Olive's egg for her, — one of the little maternal pretences by which Mrs. Cadwallader tried to realize that her daughter had not grown up. The folly of such a delusion irritated the boy, and furnished a pretext for the advice which he had been slowly accumulating to hurl at his sister's recklessness. Helping himself to an egg, he began, —

“I should think girls who were n’t old enough to open their own eggs, need not try to set the fashion for their elders!”

Neither Olive’s look of amused serenity nor his mother’s air of indifference was encouraging; yet as her brother it was his duty to warn her.

“You’ll get yourself disliked, Olive, if you go on in this way.”

He gave his egg too hard a crack with his knife, and the yolk fell on the tablecloth. He wiped off the yellow stain with his napkin, rubbed his fingers with it, crumpled it up, and putting it with a slap on the table, continued, —

“Why can’t you let girls alone, and not turn a party into an asylum for incurables?”

“Because no girl ever ought to be considered a chronic case of wall-flower. There is always something in her, if you’ll take the trouble to find it out; and as for Miss Stark, she dances beautifully,” answered Olive.

“I see you know what I mean,” replied Owen in lordly manner. “I didn’t get there till the german was nearly over, so I can’t judge of her dancing; but one of the fellows told me of your conduct, and asked if you were trying to reform the world. I hate to have my sister spoken of in that public way.”

“Is not that rather a strong word?” asked Mrs. Cadwallader.

“Not at all. It is all very well for girls to be charitable and work fellows’ initials on red silk handkerchiefs to be made into bedquilts, but I do hate to have them so reformatory as Olive is.”

“She told me of the incident about the introduction last night, — if that is what you mean, — and I can see nothing in it but the courage to be kindly,” said his mother.

“I don’t doubt that’s all Olive meant,” replied Owen; “but she is always doing unexpected things and taking up such un-

expected people ; and yet she dislikes free-and-easy ways as much as any one."

"Elegant cordiality is my motto," returned his sister ; "you would be such a nice jolly fellow, Owen, if you were not so conventional."

"That's what you are always saying," he retorted. "I tell you, one can't get on without it ; one would perpetually be offending people if one were not conventional."

"And I should constantly be offending myself if I were," said Olive.

"And I think you might have some regard for my feelings, if I am going about with you," declared the brother.

"Owen, you spoil yourself by being so afraid that you are not acting according to rule. The rules you take are founded on fancied necessities, not on real ones."

"And yours are founded on doing as you please," was the reply.

"On doing not as I please, but as will

please some one else ; and if it is going to hurt some one's feelings for me to be unconventional with them, I won't be, as far as that person is concerned. But if conventionality is going to prevent me from being kind to somebody else, why then I shall be unconventional," Olive answered.

"The danger for you, Owen," said his mother, "is, that in your desire to be well-bred you are forgetting that being high-bred means being sympathetic. You take the conventions of society, which are, I grant you, bulwarks of defence, and shelter yourself behind them. You never do things which you ought not to do. But to guide your actions by non-committal of yourself, instead of by perception of the subtile threads which relate every little act to some great principle of intuitive morals or eternal realities, is being befogged. Every now and then the fog lifts, and you see the headlands, where you could steer and give a greeting ; yet while you are

drifting that way the fog envelops both you and the point for which you were making. You may be safe, but you have done nothing."

"Oh, Jac-mamma, it is the white smother of conventionality. It creeps all over you, you are penetrated with it before you know it; yet it is so pretty!" interrupted the girl.

"Yes, Olive; but you, on the other hand, must be careful to remember that though the misuse of conventionality may lead to snobbishness, and though in itself it is a question of the expedient, and so differs in character according to localities, unconventionality can become repulsive. Doing what one thinks is right, without regard to the form in which it is done, injures a good act. Unless you can beautify it with grace, it has the strength and none of the tenderness of freedom, which longs to make others as itself is."

Mr. Kimen had entered unobserved by

Mrs. Cadwallader, but not by Owen, who, as usual in Mr. Kimen's presence, felt himself judged by the mere force of contrast between them. He therefore bowed to him with as severe a dignity as his youthful years could command, and with a nod of commiseration for his mother, hastened from the room. Olive, too, contrived to leave it without shaking hands with the visitor, who in his turn was rather confused at finding himself in the position of sole respondent to Mrs. Cadwallader. In his distress he uttered the very thought which was often in his mind, but which he considered unworthy of a future minister of the gospel, who should be welcome at all times and seasons, — "I am afraid I am in the way."

"Oh, no," she replied. "One is always thankful to a friend who interrupts a long sentence. The uses of conventionality are so much more apparent than its insidiousness, that I often find myself erring by talking

too emphatically about its evil ; with which, after all, one may never be infected."

"Does being in earnest about things prevent the danger?" asked Mr. Kimen.

The lady busied herself with her teacups to hide her expression. She felt as indignant with him for his overweening earnestness, as she did with her son for his belittling conventionality. Recovering her composure, she answered, —

"Only as one danger is avoided by incurring another. The unseasoned earnestness of youth has its own perils."

Mr. Kimen looked troubled. Was he young? Did she mean to suggest to him a change in heart, or in manner? He could not be frivolous in either; he might never accomplish anything, but at least he must believe in his own earnestness.

Olive had followed her brother into the hall. With no consideration of his feelings, she asked him to leave a package for her as he went down town. The bundle, as she

held it up, looked like a charity offering. He hesitated. He always wished they had a man to do errands, as had other people.

"I could roll it up tight; it might go into your bag," suggested Olive, demurely.

"Then why could you not have said so in the first place? It would have saved time," said he, his countenance lighting.

"Bring home some fellow to dinner with you, won't you?" urged his sister as she squeezed the bundle into his new morocco bag; "you know such nice fellows."

"The kind I like don't suit you," was the gruff answer. "You want the homeless sort, though they may not be to your taste. You are always trying to suit both conscience and taste. If you would be content to be true to the latter, you could let alone the leadings of the first."

Olive colored a little. Owen often saw through her weaknesses, though he failed to comprehend her strength. He felt his advantage and followed it up.

“Girls are humbugs, any way. They are forever asking one his opinion of fellows, as if the morality of the universe depended on them.”

“It does, Owen, but you won’t see it,” replied Olive, almost tearfully. “We ask you about a boy or a man, and you say he is a good fellow, and we feel he is n’t. You might own it, merely enough to justify us or to put us on our guard. You call it honor not to say anything against a fellow, even if it is true; that is what makes society so dreadful. We girls would not be such fools if you boys were truer about each other; and as you are not, we can’t always tell the hay-fever kind from the other kind.”

“Olive, you are a dear good little sister, but I have seen more of the world than you have. I know men, and you had better learn to endure the conventions of society than go round separating the chaff from the wheat, and deciding upon who has got hay fever and who has been on a lark.”

CHAPTER XV.

A BOX.

OWEN'S perpetual fear of committing himself often deprived him of pleasure, though it kept him from folly. A summer at Narragansett Pier had greatly enlarged his knowledge of girls. There he had met Dolly Slater, in whom he became absorbed as far as it was prudent. Pathetic he certainly was, for he spent whole mornings in his room meditating upon her. Yet when winter came and she was in her father's house, he delayed calling upon her, fearing that the old man would speak of him as one of my "girl's beaux."

Dolly, a damsel of rising fame, had often blushed for the parental homeliness of phrase, but she could not afford to be

taken up and put down again by a mere minister's son. To acknowledge herself neglected would involve the failure of her vast social schemes. She prepared vengeance. She began by bowing to him formally; she spoke of him to others as a summer acquaintance, as an amiable boy useful in bringing the water at picnics. Her remarks reached his ears.

When this had been effected, she gave a small german on purpose not to invite him. Her mother did not yet dare to engage a hall for this purpose. That would come a year or two later, when there were more calls to return. Meanwhile an informal few friends just in their own parlor; the furniture pushed back carelessly; an impromptu little supper of birds and ices, with menus all engraved, — would be *recherché*. The affair was to be so very small that it got talked about, and many watched for invitations who did not receive them. The success of the party was thereby insured.

Owen regretted his caution, especially as his use of propriety equally forbade him to say anything against a young lady or against himself. If he could only prove to her that his summer fancy for her had arisen from his gregarious habit of mind, from his general inclination for any pretty girl, and not from a little passion for herself, except so far as she represented her sex, he could save the honor of his set from being tarnished through his slight acquaintance with her. It must be done by manners, not by words, which would commit him. He laid his plans. The next Sunday, after church, when all the world walked down the avenue, would furnish a conspicuous occasion for his polite indifference.

On the morning of that day he sat far back in church, that he might be sure to meet Lura Jenkins, who was all the fashion, as she came down the aisle. He asked permission to escort her home. This accomplished, they soon met Miss

Slater coming in an opposite direction. Owen saw her afar, and became absorbed in Miss Jenkins, stooping forward to listen to her in eager fashion. Then, as if blinded by an interfering cloud, he threw back his head, beheld Dolly, who had almost passed him, quickly turned half round, pulled off his hat as if he would not on any account have failed to observe her, and re-swung himself toward Miss Jenkins's muff, with its knot of wild roses.

He had proved to his own satisfaction that he knew how to be a gentleman. Miss Slater's annoyance was plainly visible to the line of girls whom she immediately met. Olive, who had seen it all, was with them. Indignant at the expedients to which social pique could resort, yet with supreme pity for any girl who was snubbed, she left her companions and joined Dolly Slater. A little later Miss Slater parted with her at her own door, vowing eternal friendship to Olive for

thus effectually softening the poignancy of the studied sarcastic bow bestowed upon her. Certainly the brother must have been invited to the party, if his sister walked with Dolly, reasoned the spectators.

Owen came home wrathful; he did not dare again to reflect on his sister's conduct, for he felt himself immeasurably little, and he could not afford to betray his mortification. He went to his room and upset things generally, which is always an efficacious means of restoring one's own balance. Wishing still further to compose his perturbed spirit, he bethought him of clearing out his closet. Caressingly he smoothed his dress-coat, and tried to efface the half inch of glistening surface on each side of the back seams. In replacing it on the shelf (for having to be economical, he always folded his suits), he stumbled over a box and uttered an exclamation of vexation. To find that his coat was growing shiny

before the season was over, and then to stub his toe, was humiliating.

“It is that fellow Kimen’s box,” he said to himself. “I don’t see why father need take such interest in these half-fledged ministers. Kimen will never make any mark in the world. Because I have an attic room, the box is stowed away up here to be handy to the skylight in case a fire breaks out. I don’t believe there is anything in it but his good resolutions and his hopes of eternity. There! I won’t keep it here any longer;” and he pushed it out of the closet.

Unfortunately the closet door opened close on to the chamber door, and that was opposite the head of the stairs, there being but a narrow entry between the door and the staircase. His vigorous thrust sent the box out of the closet door, out of his room door, down the stairs, where its farther descent was barred by Mr. Kimen’s ascent.

Owen, who had rejoiced in his impersonal but objective punishment of Mr. Kimen, was now shocked to find that that gentleman was aware of it. The boy stood confused and muttering at the top of the flight ; Mr. Kimen stood midway, one foot poised against his property, his grief and surprise showing plainly. The noise brought up the whole family. Olive at once comprehended the train of reasoning in her brother's mind and burst into peals of laughter, which so greatly annoyed Mr. Kimen that he meekly observed that he did n't see any fun in the occurrence.

"I did n't mean to touch the pesky thing ; it was all an accident," apologized Owen. "I was just thinking, and it happened to be in the way, that was all."

"It seems my box is as much in the way as I am myself," replied Mr. Kimen.

"Not at all, either of you ; it is a pastoral hotel, any way," urged Owen, trying to be funny.

Mr. Kimen grew tired of acting as prop to the box, and changed his position. This sent it rumbling down to the lower entry, where Olive effectually stopped it by sitting down upon it.

“Take it as a joke,” said she. “It is not a serious matter; it has n’t any moral bearings; you and your box are not the same.”

“‘Love me, love my dog,’” returned Mr. Kimen, gravely.

The girl’s eye flashed.

“Personalities are more in the way than boxes, Mr. Kimen,” she answered, rising with vexation.

Owen’s better nature came to relieve the growing tragedy. He met Mr. Kimen, who still stood in the middle of the stairs, and held out his hand, saying, —

“I honestly beg the box’s pardon, and yours. It has never been in my way until five minutes ago; then I happened to hit it, and I was so cross with something else, which occurred as I was walking home

from church, that I vented my vexation on the first object which annoyed me. It is a huge joke on me, as Olive says. I'll have the box back in a trice."

Before Mr. Kimen had time to answer, or to consider what to reply, Owen had passed him and shouldered the box and borne it back to his closet. Olive disappeared, and Mr. Kimen walked slowly down to the library, pondering upon his wisest course of action concerning the affair, and upon Olive's laughter, which was regardless of the dignity of human nature.

The circumstance was soon forgotten, save as it was now and then referred to in the annals of family anecdotes.

CHAPTER XVI.

PANSIES.

OF course Olive told the incident of Owen's mishap to Miss Curtis, who said :

"I cannot make out Mr. Kimen. I cannot tell whether he is veneered with earnestness, or whether he is a tough pine-knot which will make a blaze in the world by and by."

"I wish my friends did not so often strike me as possibilities," answered Olive, thoughtfully.

"Child, you could not endure most of them if you did not look at them in that light."

"It is my old, childish puzzle, aunt ; I have given up wanting to be somebody else, and just take myself piecemeal, day

by day ; but I have not yet learned how to make my friends over into what they might be."

"Most of us can't generate our own oil, Olive ; we have to be thankful to shine by reflected light. If the angels are radiant with it, we humans must be content to be known as we might be. Blessed are the child-makers for some of us."

"What do you mean?" asked the girl in an almost frightened tone, for she never before had found Miss Curtis pathetic.

"Nothing, child, nothing ; people grow either sentimental or crabbed in their old age. I have tried one way so long that I thought I'd try the other, and see if I could fit myself to a halo against the time I might need it."

With evident effort the old lady turned the conversation into its usual half-sarcastic, half-gossipy vein, and Olive had sufficient tact to follow her lead. From Miss Curtis's crisp way of thinking, Olive

was learning the reality that inheres in everything. This knowledge, added to her mother's opinions, based on long views and the relation of little to big, was giving her a very comprehensive heart and mind. Still, she could not free herself from the notion that Miss Curtis was shaping her with intent,—for what, she could not divine. But even the sense of being wrought upon for the benefit of an unknown quantity could not destroy the happiness which was always welling up in her like laughing-gas, as Owen termed it.

Miss Curtis and Olive were sitting by their usual seat in the window, but Miss Curtis was not observing her neighbors. Since she had known Olive, her curiosity about other people had lessened. She still indulged herself in extraordinary actions, and maintained a strict censorship of private judgment over the feminine and explosive communications of the "Transcript." She sent imaginary items about imaginary

persons to the Sunday paper, which the editor innocently published. However, after her sponge-cake-baby party of years ago she had ceased to mystify children.

"My dear," said she once in answer to the entreaties of Olive against some fresh oddity of hers, "I must keep up my character for being a little crazy, or I shall lose my freedom. I must have occupation."

But this morning she was strangely silent. She had grown old within a day or two. It troubled Olive. The girl wished her father were not a minister, that he might have time to call on Miss Curtis. Was her friend getting ready to die? Oh, if she would only tell why she had never married!

Olive knew little about the lady's early life, except that she had not lived in the city, and that when her father died he had left a large sum of money. This was to be expended either in building a college for boys in his scattered township, way down by

the seashore, or its income was to be used by his daughter in helping women to get married, — provided she could find a sufficient number of them who wished to be, — and at her death she was to dispose of the principal as she chose.

Miss Curtis had taken six months to consider the matter, and then had announced that women needed marriage more than men needed education. A town-meeting had been called to remonstrate against her decision. She had received its written communication with contempt, had torn it in little pieces and returned it to the committee who had waited upon her. Then the village lawyer had been employed to find a flaw in the will. He had a spinster daughter whom he wanted to see married before he left her alone; therefore he decided to let personal interest outweigh public good. He would neither find what did not exist, nor swear away the old man's sanity. The town was indignant. It had

dreamed of a red brick building with verandas and porticos ; of an influx of summer boarders and consequent rise in the price of butter and chickens. It refused to extend protracted condolences to Miss Curtis ; the church held a series of prayer-meetings to alter her decision : all was in vain. The will had been properly drawn, executed, and admitted to probate. No bonds had been required of her as sole executrix ; no trustees had been appointed for her ; to no one was she compelled to account for disposal of income or principal. She rented her house and farm, and left the town amid the execrations of her neighbors.

All this Olive knew, but the life prior to this departure and a few years after it were a blank, of which she knew nothing and had never dared to ask. Miss Curtis had finally settled in Boston, and had lived in the same house for over thirty years.

Her way of living had at first attracted little social attention. Bric-à-brac dealers

seemed unaware of her existence. Gradually philanthropists and stock-brokers spread the impression of her wealth and eccentricities among their wives, who retailed it as facts which their husbands had heard at the club. It was found impossible to direct the channels of her beneficence, or to persuade her to take any one into her esteem who was not personally agreeable to her. Into her confidence she received no one.

Miss Curtis had an intense horror of early marriages, which she considered as whirlpools and quicksands from which a safe return to normal happiness was impossible. She despised the clerk or mechanic who married on the instalment plan and brought his bride home to hired furniture. It was tempting Providence, whose designs for the future were inscrutable, but which, interpreted by future poverty and the necessities of a large and growing family, indicated disapproval. On the other

hand, Miss Curtis respected the man who invested his earnings in mortgages. She advised him freely and showed him how to watch the pecuniary decadence of a street from the door-plates of private residences to those of physician's signs ; to dental, hygienic, and physical advertisements ; to paste-boards hanging in front windows, with "Rooms to let" inscribed upon them in large letters ; and the final transformation of the street into shops, with studios to rent above them, where should gather the maiden artists of society.

Miss Curtis spent her income in various ways, or allowed it to accumulate, according to the needs of marriageable women. Occasionally some of the principal had gone for a worthy couple whose ideas in regard to economy and a small family she approved. Sometimes it was merely the trousseau she provided for the bride, or the three rooms she furnished for the simple home. Oftener than any other way it

was the gift of a sum of money to the woman, but in trust; of which Miss Curtis paid over the income regularly, the principal going to the wife at the time of Miss Curtis's death. Again it was a loan, of which, when it was all repaid, Miss Curtis would give back a part outright. Her clients, as she called them, were scattered far and wide.

For a few years after she left her country home her bitterness toward it extended to all in its neighborhood. When at last she heard of a young man who was dying, whom one of the village girls wished to marry, that her tenderness might befriend him, Miss Curtis suddenly sent him a check, on condition that he died. The gift was accepted, with the guarantee of the sick man that he would comply with its terms. Either joy at being the helpless instrument by which his wife would become a widow of means, or else her loving care, made him recover. The money was returned to the donor. Miss Curtis, aston-

ished at such honesty, placed him in charge of her own farm, supplied him with cod-liver oil and pork jackets in case of relapse, and afterward boarded with him and his wife for many a summer, watching his health and his early vegetables. Gradually her rancor at her townsmen was appeased. Whenever she discovered a damsel whose heart was as true as her physique was strong, and a man who loved the soil and oxen, she started them in domesticity.

In consequence of these judicious weddings and a railroad, the town had grown. Miss Curtis often determined to take Olive there, but she dreaded to let even the girl be aware of her simple enjoyment in farm life and country pleasures; of her delight in cutting the flowers from her own garden, for which she owed no one a "thank you." In the city, one always has to remember when bouquets are sent, that in due time the compliment may be returned. She

loved to put the yellow nasturtiums in the brown Moravian jar which had stood on her father's high mantel-piece ever since she was a girl. She gathered the bachelor buttons into the blue Delft pitcher. Over her pansies she lingered long. They were laid far apart from each other in the saucer with its dainty sprigs of enamel. Each heart's-ease looked at her with the eyes of friends now resting under the spreading myrtle. She gazed down into their velvety softness, into their gay impertinences of laughing colors, and recalled the by-gone fancies and the wan hopes of her girlhood. Tenderly her withered fingers hovered over the dark blue purple petals. Did a tear fall on the green pistil? Did the angel of the flowers send up its perfumed message, that love liveth ever?

Could she let Olive see her wind the delicate tracery of the bridal wreath over a clump of white dahlias, in a distant field, the opened wealth of fluted petals bending

under the light weight of grace thrown over them? Could she permit the girl to follow her as she hid her feet under the glowing bunch-berries, or wove yards of "love-tape" from the little trinities of pine needles, or pulled the crinkled lichen and the coral moss, — the fairies' tea-set, — and played housekeeping with her memories of the past? Did the wee red cups remind her of her father's tea-table, and of some one who sat there with her?

She knew the girl would be merciful, but one wants no resurrection of the buried past through sympathy. Yet Olive must go and realize the life that might soon be before her.

CHAPTER XVII.

FARMER NUTTING.

It was rumored in Ludben that Miss Curtis was coming to her old home and was to bring with her the daughter of a dear friend. The young men began to clean their rusty harnesses preparatory to picnics; the country girls rejected "Harper's Bazar" and waited to borrow patterns from the young lady from the city; the whole village put on an air of senile youth. The babies remained the only natural inhabitants of the place. Every one else was intent on appearances. The minister shoved aside his sermon on the beauty of early death, and began another on the advantages of old age. The gray-headed

farmers, as they talked down street from the rough uncovered seats of their rickety wagons, or as they clustered round the village tavern and called for ginger pop, told stories of the olden time.

“Waal, naow, I reckon,” said Farmer Hastings, “we ’re a mighty sight better off, taken as a hull, than if that ’ere ’cademy had been built, with the porto-rico on the front, and the pizarro on the rear. It would have cost a heap o’ cash, an’ they du tell that the old man had n’t sech a pile as he ’d orter ’cumulate, sence he was never a drinking man.”

“Waal, naow, I kinder rather see the urchins a-bobbing about over their fathers’ graves than a solitary-looking town sech as is prevalent out to Dakoty. If the old man’s daughter had n’t been a woman, she’d never have set such a sight by marrying,” chimed in Farmer Nutting.

“You have scotched it, Brother Nutting. Wimmen-folks is long-headed in virtoo of

their heart. She see'd that marrying is the beginning and end on't things, a raal primary chaos, with a tower of Babel at 't other end. There are nigh unto forty couple who's rooted here in this 'ere township, seeing as how she'd set 'em up, who 'd 'a' gone out to Dakoty and left the choir if she had n't conditioned her gift on their staying put."

"It all comes," rejoined the first speaker, "from Miss Curtis being a clear-headed, non-suffraging woman, who knows the wuth of fat and lean to a pig, and uses phosphate to her land 'cause the Lord's sparing of his rain in these latter days. It's a sight better for us than a brick college, and scraggly students a-scenting themselves with pennyroyal."

Farmer Hastings pulled up his reins and tried to balance himself on the narrow seat so that he could urge his spare horse to a slow trot and yet keep his ear toward the talkers. Remembering that he had not

had the last word, he dropped the reins and faced clear round, saying, —

“B’ys, Farmer Nutting ’s got the core o’ the thing. It’s a sight better making these stubbly lands bloom like the Jordan, than it is to spread book eddication. Machinery and populous trees is what a growing taown like ours needs. We’ve got the finest land in all the State, and when her father died it was all run out ; naow it’s a first-class ra’al thriving taown, with modern improvements. Our county fairs and prizes for bedquilts and cheeses bring in more cash to the wimmen-folks than all the students’ washing could have done. Our young ’uns, they improve on their dads, and get up fancy farming and mechanical dairies. Won’t we give her a funeral and an ovation when she gits ready!” and Hastings again took up the leather reins, mended here and there with weak string, and prepared to start.

“Waal, now,” resumed Nutting, “don’t

you be in a stew to get off. Natur don't grow with 'lacrity, like a green cowcumber vine. Let's consider on that funeral;" and he looked crosswise at the columns of smoke he blew to the right from his mouth as he sat on top of a barrel outside the door. "I'm one of them kind that likes to eulogize folks and write epitaphs on 'em when they are living. We might give her a toast and a bumper when she comes along."

"She don't hanker arter that kind o' celeebriety," was the answer. "She's getting on in life, an' she likes to mouse round in her own fashion an' see if tater-bugs has crawled up here; when they du, I reckon the child'en will have to fetch her baskets full 'fore she marries 'em. 'Long of marrying, did you ever happen ter reflect on why she ain't a been yoked herself?"

"She ain't the circumwenting, wheedling kind that gits a man asy; but if you's

knowing on to any partikler reason, let's hear on to it."

"Waal now," answered Hastings, slowly, "I du recall a likely chap as was round here when she was a young 'ooman; but I allers sort o' reckoned that he did n't hitch on to morals and new-fangled ways o' doing a man's dooty. Ef I knows anything rightly, it's that she's mighty sorry. Eh, b'ys?"

The old men looked up, for several other teams had come along and were standing diagonally to the wooden sidewalk, while their owners were lounging about. Hastings's memory strengthened when he saw his audience, and having disposed of the quid of tobacco in the hollow of his cheek, he continued his recollections:—

"Waal, as she an' I are nigh on to the end o' things, 'tain't no harm in guessing, and I'm kinder weary with the heaviness of silence this forty year an' more. Why, you see, 'fore she left here for good, when

we were so riled up on account of her pa's will, I saw her an' him — I mean her chap — adown by the brook that runs through my fields, an' they were a-skipping stones along the water; but they could n't throw any distance to speak of, seein' as how he had his arm round her figger. You mind how, if you go up the stream to the left an' turn in at the bars, you come to a kind of a churchyard, only thar been't no tombstones to sit on. Waal, now, that used to be her pa's flower-garden, and her ma's bones ar' resting thar; poor lady! she trotted after her husband all her days. Them two — her chap and herself — used to play in among them flowers and in the woods like two lambs a-friskin'. 'T wur n't no sense in it, but I wished I could fix her so pretty as he did with berries and flowers a-sticking into her hair. In them days I was taown sheriff, an' it war my dooty to go round peeking. Waal, now, ever sence that time, when she gits here,

she goes down to that brook all alone and skips stones, mighty feeble like; and then she turns in to her ma's grave, an' thar she's sot. I reg'lar go up to the attic window an' spy on her. It's lonesome for her, an' I likes to keep her company. They du say that love's powerful long-lived; but I never had a widder, an' 't ain't likely naow as I ever shall. That's all, b'ys."

The air was thick with smoke as the farmers knocked out the ashes from their clay pipes and thrust them into their pockets. Each man clambered up to his wagon-seat and drove off silently.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MISS CURTIS'S CLIENTS.

OLIVE, Miss Curtis, a great box of canned goods, an assortment of Bent's crackers, and sundry trunks, arrived at the same time in Ludben. The station was a modern structure of two baronial waiting-rooms designated in universal terms "For Men," "For Women," rather than labelled in the language of society, which seeks to mollify feminine existence by calling women "ladies." The high, deep, red brick fireplaces were filled with wilted branches. Canary-bird cages, flower-pots, a rocking-chair, a muslin tripod work-basket, and a box of marsh mallows, with its floury dust scattered over the telegraph blanks, beautified the corner of the dreary place called the telegraph-

operator's room; where, protected by a high and open balustrade, which separated this nook from the rest of the space, an immature and frizzled damsel worked the instrument.

Miss Curtis abominated these attempts to adorn a professional life, and always sent her messages down to the next station, where a man in homespun, with a spittoon and a pipe, smoked away the hours in the interim of despatches. To-day the station and baggage masters, the telegraphic female clerk, the freight hands, the men who had nothing to do, the gossips, and a few "help" from the village tavern, with belts drawn tightly round the waists of their striped dresses, gathered about the platform of the station. Farmer Nutting took it upon himself to be the interpreter of the village greetings.

"Waal, Miss Curtis, you got along 'fore the tater-bugs, this time! Had any sick spells sence we seed you? You hold your

age surprisin' ! Be she your 'dopted darter ?" he asked, pointing to Olive.

"I don't interfere with Nature ; she has her own parents, but she has come down here to learn farming," answered Miss Curtis.

"Waal, now, grafting ain't no sech bad thing for folks any more than 't is for trees ; the parent stock gits run out. Waal, the long and short on 't is, we are a heap glad to see you. Bisness is thriving." And Nutting unwillingly retreated, to let others approach and shake hands with the new arrivals.

"The parson an' the teacher 'll call round to-morrer to enquire after your health," called the farmer, as the ladies mounted into a high, black, three-seated vehicle called "the Express."

"Come up yourself, Mr. Nutting," said Miss Curtis.

"Waal, now, seeing as you asked me, maybe I will. I'd kinder like to tell you

how the 'lections went. It broke up s'ciety here toler'ble bad. They du say as how folks can't come together agin; sech words as has been used made a judgment day: dimmycrats and 'publicans war reg'lar sheep an' goats. I want to advise yer 'gainst giving any of yer old clothes to 'em long-winded, speechifying, 'publican wimmen-folks, who ar' klu-kluxing respectable townsmen. Naow, Miss Curtis, don't yer."

The lady smiled, and told the driver to start up his horses.

"Don't yer, naow," urged the farmer. "I'll take it as a personal favor to my family if yer don't."

Miss Curtis's words were lost between the flapping canvas sides of "the Express" and the voices of the little boys who shouted their "hoorays."

"The Express" stopped at an old-fashioned farm-house with the attachments of a modern barn and a cobble-stone pathway

bordered with brilliant widths of gay flowers. Miss Curtis received a welcome from the man and his wife, which was a composite of gladness at seeing her, of deference to her as owner, of gratitude to her for past and future favors, and also of that cumbersome sense of equality between her and them which is never forgotten in America, since at any time a farmer may be called from his hereditary fields to his State legislature.

The supper was soon served. It was less heterogeneous in its aspect than is usual in the country, and was shared by all alike; for on the same principle by which she made evening calls upon her clients, Miss Curtis considered a meal a revealer of family moods. She lost no opportunity for strengthening her preconceived impressions of people by watching them at unexpected moments.

Several friends dropped in after tea. For all, Miss Curtis had some characteristic

word of welcome. Olive's wonder kept her silent. She had never seen her old friend in her baronial style, which softened her to such a degree that the girl's curiosity and fear were alike aroused.

"Child," said Miss Curtis to her as they parted at the chamber doors, "I've got home, that's all it is. Don't grudge me the little love I've earned. Most people bask in what comes to them by grace. I've been years making a welcome for myself; let me sun myself in it for a while."

"Why, aunt, it is only that you seem so happy!"

"And so I seemed unnatural!" answered Miss Curtis, sadly. "Well, you have cured my forgetfulness;" and the bitter look came back into her face.

"Oh, aunt, I didn't mean to. Do be happy!"

The old lady turned her candle full upon the girl's countenance, saying with a quick transition of manner to sternness, "I have

faith in you because you construe life by 'to be' instead of 'to have.' May you always be able to take yourself as you are, and not have to make yourself into what you should be. Olive, I am very tired of striving. Good-night." And Miss Curtis opened her door so quickly that the sudden draught blew out the candle.

The door was slammed to on the inside. Olive, remembering that she had seen her aunt place some matches in the broad tin basin of the candlestick, forbore to knock and offer to relight the candle. Betrayal of sudden emotion reacts in concealment of it, and Olive respected this universal law.

The days soon settled into grooves. At sunset Miss Curtis wandered away by herself and no one asked where, for she then assumed her let-me-alone manner. In the afternoons and evenings Olive was either left to herself, or Miss Curtis provided some entertainment for her. All the young peo-

ple called, and Olive soon found herself deep in a list of engagements for walks and croquet (tennis had not yet taken possession of the town), for tea-parties and dances. In the mornings Miss Curtis took her on tours of inspection. Sometimes they were gone all day. Olive was perpetually amazed at the knowledge of farm life which her aunt evinced. The men talked with her about the land, the crops, the hay, and their stock, as if she were an old settler. There was nothing that escaped her vigilant eye, from the merest speck of red sorrel in the field to the corns on the horses' hoofs.

She not only knew the names of her clients' children, but she kept the records of their dentition and their vaccination. She had provided her families with red flags, which were to be hung out in cases of scarlet fever. She knew how much pork they had salted, and how much soft soap the women had made. She was perpetu-

ally carrying a bundle of rags to some one or other, to be woven into rugs representing Rebecca at the Well, or antediluvian animals.

There was an air of prosperity in all the homes, for which, as it might be said, Miss Curtis had given the plant. There was a general effect of cool sitting-rooms; of Brussels tapestry carpets with designs of moss roses; of shining kitchen tins and sanded floors. Each house had its chest of accumulating bedquilts of myriad patterns, the favorite design being an olive-green patchwork basket holding yellow-olive calico oranges. Woe to the unhappy housewife whose pieces were not exactly matched, or where a corner of the cotton triangle butted against the base of another triangular scrap, thus narrowing or widening the dimensions of the third three-cornered bit! Even if Miss Curtis's visits reminded Olive of the census collector, it was evident that no one dreaded her coming; yet she

bestowed advice freely, and gifts sparingly, usefully, and unexpectedly.

Miss Curtis had a day-book and ledger way of putting down the points of each family, as they varied from summer to summer. Olive was obliged to transfer Miss Curtis's deeds and her reflections upon her people from one account to the other.

Said Miss Curtis one day, on their return home: "Write down, child, under Ross, 'Found the woman spent her time in making calla-lily tidies of white silk and green worsted. Misplaced sentiment. See that she has a tonic. Carry her over to next year for improvement.'"

Of another person Olive wrote: "If her husband has not a hired girl by next Saturday, sell out the lease."

"It is hopeless," Miss Curtis explained to Olive, "to do for a family, where the man sublets his wife as cook for the household, especially in haying-time. Women's

souls are worth more than hay. Scrubbing acts on the intellect, and is biblical; but baking pies is idiocy."

Farmer Nutting came up early one morning to call.

"I say, Miss Curtis, I kinder wish you'd hitch up and go 'cross the river to see Nancy. She's more'n riled than common. She says you hain't been to see her sence you come round. She says her stomach's not sot right; that it goes to vegetation. I dunno rightly what she means, but it sounds as if some harb medicine might work a 'tarnal cure on her."

"It's no use, Mr. Nutting. I haven't been, on purpose. She is more aggravating than I am myself. She is just like black flies to me," said Miss Curtis.

"Waal, now, that's curus. If she war n't my sister, I should be uncommon obleeged to her; but seeing as she is, I calklate to git her married off my hands afore long. 'Thar's a Methody round that's all struck

up with her economy. I should have starved if it warn't for your baccy, Miss Curtis. It's mighty filling when you are all hollow."

"She isn't to marry," insisted Miss Curtis. "She'd blight his life worse than a spell of bad weather on cornstalks."

"Waal, now, last night I was kinder hopeful, an' I put for the minister 'cross lots; he'd gone off on an exchange, 'cause he'd used up his brains, gin the Sabbath come; an' by the time he gits back, the Methody'll get gone. Yer see he's on a circuit, an' he'd take her with him cruisin' round on parishes, an' they would n't find her out 'fore he'd git another location. She's got a lien on the farm, to be sure; but I'd work it chirpy as a grasshopper while she's off. Miss Curtis, thar ain't no other way of gittin rid of her."

"Does she still iron out her paper bags and take them back to the grocery?" asked the lady.

“Yes, by Jerusalem! she does; an’ she’s been usin’ our ma’s old blue crockery set, ’cause she said it didn’t show grease like the white kind; an’ she’s taught that Methody how to keep one edge o’ his plate clean for the pie, alongside the taters an’ the stew, so she won’t have to git down another plate. Them’s more val’able qualities in a wife than in a sister,—eh, Miss Curtis?”

“Farmer Nutting, I won’t have anything to do with her. She has been tempting Providence these last ten years to get her married, by dyeing her hair and by asking other people if their teeth were natural, as much as to say that hers are so. I’m not going to be its agent now.”

“Don’t fire up so, Miss Curtis. I only thought as how if you’d send him a V, an’ give her one of your old black silks, it might hurry up matters. My life’s a sight miserabler than yourn.”

“I’m sorry for you, Mr. Nutting; but

you can't give up a natural trust like a sister, so don't you be so cantankerous as to lead that Methody man to invest in a wife when he can't get any income out of her except that she'll economize him to shreds."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BAPTISM.

MISS CURTIS followed her own ideas, regardless of others' whims, and gave her money as she chose, especially in affairs of religion. The townspeople were not always satisfied with her wide creed and deed. They had already two churches, and now another kind of sectarian philanthropist wanted to build a third meeting-house. It was considered a favorable opening for liberal ideas, that people were hungering and thirsting for the faith which they knew in spirit but had never heard with their ears nor seen vested in an organization. A middle-aged, good, contemplative man had been preaching every Sunday in the town-hall. The hearers consisted of three or four

intelligent, prosperous persons, several tired wives, a few lank men of disjointed mind, and sundry girls and boys who strolled into the hall for want of something else to do.

The audience, it was said, could not grow amid the week-day associations of the place. A certain amount, it was hoped, would be given from missionary funds, if a sufficient quota could be raised on the spot. The Rev. Mr. Crane solicited Miss Curtis's aid. His request awoke her direst anger.

For thirty years she had been trying to weld the town into unity. Two small parishes had faded out of existence with the death of their elders. It was her ardent hope to live to see one or the other of the present churches dematerialize; she cared little whether it were the Methodists or Baptists who remained. She herself would have been called a liberal, but she detested the name because it was so often coupled with illiberal interference; yet she dreamed

of a church so broad that it could be joined by all who were reverent and truthful.

The clerical gentleman urged his claim, and appealed to her supposed denominational loyalty.

"I have n't any," replied Miss Curtis, "just as I have n't any patriotism. I don't like geographical limitation of affection any better than I like protection in religion."

"Free trade, then, ought to allow me to establish our own faith," urged Mr. Crane.

"Free trade," sniffed Miss Curtis, "does n't coop itself up in churches; it does n't try to hatch thought by using ministers as incubators. Those who say they believe in doctrines are so doubtful about their opinions that they protect them by church fairs and by selling ministerial photographs."

"Still, don't you think a sermon or two might be useful?" asked the parson.

"I think a life or two might be more useful. If you and your wife will come

here and live, and show people by your living how your 'faith makes you faithful,' I'll pay you a salary for doing things which ministers have not got time to do. Sermons are killing parsons; they have not leisure to be either examples or friends."

"But the church," suggested Mr. Crane, timidly.

"Let the church go; just live and do your duty, and —"

She was interrupted by Olive, who added, "And be happy in doing it;" for she had been listening to the conversation, though apparently tabulating her aunt's impressions of the day for future reference.

Miss Curtis looked gratefully at her, saying, —

"She has said it for me. Come and do that, and your children will see the town alive with character and worship, though its phraseology may be very different from yours."

"If you think I could undermine their

present beliefs, I might," still pleaded the preacher.

"It is not undermining," replied she, "it is the doctrine of equivalents — give and get, Nature's way — that is wanted. Hold your own belief so strongly that you can wait for others to grow up into it. Don't thrust it on to them like a prickly burr, to worry them."

Miss Curtis had risen as she spoke, and was standing by the window. Unconsciously she ran her hand up and down the lemon verbena that was in the flower-stand. Gathering its fragrance in her palm, and holding it up to her face, she seemed to breathe in its spicy aroma.

"Your faith should be a sweet-smelling savor unto the Lord, like this flower, against which men can rub their lives and come away scented with the strength of its sweetness."

She spoke slowly and sank down wearily, tired by her unwonted feeling. Olive laid

aside her work and rose, as if waiting for a vision. The minister was too narrow to forget himself, and made one more endeavor to enlist her co-operation in his limitations.

“I follow your meaning, madam, comparatively; but as we all want to bear witness to our own beliefs, I should take it as a personal favor to our denomination if you expressed your disapprobation of the coming baptism down by the shore.”

“The benefit of immersion,” replied Miss Curtis, “is, that you know when you’ve got beyond your own depth.”

The minister stared; her manner, if not her words, signified dismissal of himself and his subject. He took up his soft hat, brushed it with his coat-sleeve, never noticing that it caved in under the sweeping strokes of his arm, and departed, grieved.

“That man makes me think of the old saying, ‘You can’t see a town because of the houses;’ he can’t see that there is a

church universal because of his own sect," was all that Miss Curtis vouchsafed as her opinion of him.

The next day was Sunday. The silvery sky of the early morning had deepened into the leaden gray of the afternoon, when Miss Curtis and Olive took their way to the little Baptist meeting-house on the outskirts of the town. It was a barn-like structure, with its pulpit ornaments lacking in one tassel for the Bible cushion, and in one arm of the beaded, perforated cardboard cross which hung limply over the pulpit from the middle portion of the Scriptures. The seats were very narrow and hard; the window-panes were darkened by layers of sacred dust; the wind tore down the chimney and creaked through the broken stove-pipe out into the pews; the mildew frescoed the plastered walls.

An old man, with unstarched cotton collar to his shirt, a red silk handkerchief twisted around his neck, and heavy warts

on his cheeks, was praying the Lord to guide his people through the rising waters of Jordan,—the river of life which was swallowing all present up into glory. As his voice rose and fell with the imaginary waves, his little grandchild clambered down from the seat; clutching hold of the old man's wide trousers, he pulled himself round in front of his grandfather's face and lifted his arms, as if in deprecation of his grandsire's watery earnestness. The cane on which the aged form was leaning dropped from the hand as it sought the boy's fingers and clasped them, while the other hand was laid on the child's head, as the prayer continued and the hearers called out the old-time responses. Olive had never been to a nautical prayer-meeting, and the shipwrecks of existence impressed even her sunny nature with dread. She thought she was out to windward, and that the pleasures of the world were breakers ahead. If she could only reach the lee

shore and cast anchor in the port of heaven ! Secretly she fancied that a pious person, who had not been to sea, might be mixed in his comparison of religious and marine life.

After a short address, more ejaculating prayer, and hymns whose theology ill suited their tunes, the people rose and wandered by twos from the church door, down the steep road, up over the stony hill, along the gullied paths, to the cove, where the fresh water of the river poured over the barnacled rocks and drew its strength from the dripping seaweed. Miss Curtis and Olive rode after the procession and offered their spare seat to an aged woman, whom they overtook hobbling along at slow step after the others. She looked in terror at Olive's Panama hat with its cluster of apple-blossoms, exclaiming, "The Queen o' Sheby's come to judgment, an' thar ain't no Solomon fur her. Go meet him in the waters." She raised her cane in warning,

as she retreated to the gully, where she sought safety from horse and hat. Olive shrank back, as if measured and proved unworthy the company of the baptized.

At the shore all gathered, — those who came on foot and those who had driven in their wagons. The tall, gray cliffs on either side shut in the beach; beyond lay the horizon broken by headlands, — a wild dreary landscape, with the human figures in the foreground increasing its penitential aspect.

Those who were to make a public profession of their belief, stood near to the water's edge. The minister was clad in a close-fitting garment, with tall rubber boots. The girls were dressed in black alpaca, with broad cotton lace collars. Many of them wore their hair so tightly crinkled that Olive regretted the wetting it must receive. Some of them had rubber circulars with wide sleeves, through which the water could pour as down two spouts.

Others apparently were to borrow these garments from those who went in first.

The minister began by leading down a girl so young that it seemed as if she could hardly recognize the force of her profession. Very slowly he bent her backward into the water, supporting her with his hand; very loudly he repeated the baptismal words, which the people on the shore caught up with answering cry that re-echoed amid the purple hills. Dripping, sanctified, she waded ashore and was received into her mother's arms with a "May the Lord now bless his own child." From her, like a blushing bride, she passed from one to another, who each in turn folded her to their hearts, men and women, young and old. Then she slipped off her outer dress, and, shrouded in vapor, the cold wind blowing around her, she waited till the church brothers and sisters were alike renewed by the chilly baptism of faith. The men wore yellow oil-skin coats, and seemed

more shivering or less exalted than the girls.

The elder of the church sought Miss Curtis. Tucking her elbow inside his brawny palm, he took her to the neophytes. Olive could not hear her words, but she saw her aunt bend forward, and she knew the weary lines of her face were giving place to greeting smiles as she shook hands with the boys and lingered with the girls. Was she the prophetess blessing her children? What cared she for the way they took by which to make known their fixedness of purpose! Standing by the minister's side, as Hannah may have stood by Eli when she vowed her child unto the Lord, Miss Curtis's gaze wandered from one to another of the newly baptized, who formed a circle around the two,—the relatives ranging themselves outside, and the friends and the unchurched again making an outer ring. The three circles swaying back and forth, each reversing the other's pace and

direction, sung unto the Lord Most High, until, dizzy with the mazes of turning and emotion, they sank on their knees amid a multitudinous Amen.

From the little row-boats stretched along the shore, filled with curious believers of another creed, rose a sweep of answering chords. As Miss Curtis heard the refrain, she too bent her knees, stiff with disuse, while tears crawled down her cheeks. The minister helped her rise, saying, —

“Sister, the Lord causeth even the aged bones to bless, and softeneth the rheumatiz accordin’.”

Olive, in her distant nook up among the cliffs, to which she had clambered, repeated to herself, —

“From age to age it groweth,
That radiant Faith so high,
And its crowning day is coming, by and by!”

CHAPTER XX.

THE CANDY-PULL.

“OLIVE,” said Miss Curtis the next day, “of what are you thinking?”

The girl folded one knee across the other, and her hands around the upper knee.

“I was wondering, aunt, if people ever take cold when they are baptized, and thinking what Mr. Kimen would say.”

“Those of little faith pretend that baptism makes consumption,” was the answer. “Don’t believe it, child; you never take cold when you have emotions. As for Mr. Kimen, he is too cold-blooded; baptism would n’t suit him. He would want to show people a better way when they were n’t ready for it. He is coming here.”

“Aunt, you ought to have told me. I am going home!”

Miss Curtis eyed her curiously, saying:

“You are not going to run away when you have n’t been caught. I thought you knew how to trump a knave.”

“He isn’t a knave, and I neither want to trump him nor to lose the trick; I simply don’t want to begin any game with him.”

“Why not?” asked her aunt.

“I don’t know.”

“Then it is time you did.”

“No, not yet,” answered Olive again. “First place, I am not a cause; that saves both him and me. He thinks he likes me, but it is only as I embody some principle. Then he can’t make me out, and that provokes him. He does n’t know enough of the world to take me simply, just as I am; he knows too little of himself, and fancies I could make him what he wants to be.”

“Who can, child, if you can’t?”

“No person can. It is only a cause that can grapple him. When he settles down on one, he will emancipate himself; but I don’t think he will ever make people happy,” added the girl, thoughtfully.

“Why not?” again asked Miss Curtis.

“I don’t know,” again answered Olive. “Perhaps because he himself is always his own centre; he can never get out of himself in order to see all around. It is the cause as it affects him that he considers. He is constantly looking to see what he can do, and not what the Lord will do.”

“Why, Olive, you used to feel responsible, and you were wont to ask yourself what you could do,” said her aunt.

“I know it,” was the reply. “I used to feel the whole world on my shoulders, and it weighed me down. I was always struggling against happiness for the sake of duty. Now I let myself alone, or rather I am

saturated with the beauty of life. It is all a summer day in a sunset land, with promise beyond."

"Are you growing lazy?" asked Miss Curtis.

"No, I am growing old," was the laughing reply. "It was Owen's conventionality which cured me of thinking I could straighten out things by merely being in earnest. I was so dead in earnest when I was young, — a little girl, I mean, — that I couldn't see the fun in things; and I thought that conventional people were dead-weights, and I think so still; but now I see it is their nature. They see things in a small way, and when one is in earnest to make them free and easy they close up; but if one can make them happy, they forget themselves and get out into the sunshine. So now I just look for crannies where I can put in a little tact and make others feel comfortable."

"You are very particular, or conventional,

about the fit of your dresses, even if you are wise enough not to overpower people with too much earnestness," observed Miss Curtis.

"Of course I am," said Olive. "In the first place, I feel at ease when my waist does n't wrinkle and my sleeves don't bulge. Secondly, I am a more agreeable feature in the landscape, and so others feel pleased. I don't disturb their æsthetic sense if I dress well, and I don't prejudice other people against me by their first impressions of me. Mr. Kimen!" exclaimed Olive, rising hastily, with more disappointment than surprise in her tone, as she beheld that gentleman at the door.

"Mr. Kimen! Well!" ejaculated Miss Curtis, captiously.

"I hope I don't intrude," answered he, awkwardly. "You got my letter by the morning's mail? I thought it might be an advantage to me to compare your village life with our ranch existence."

“Yes, you wrote me you were coming for an object,” remarked the elder lady.

“Life is so short, Miss Curtis ; that must be my excuse for always wanting to improve it.”

“Why don’t you leave something to be done in eternity,” she answered. “You will advance morality ahead of chemistry ; the world will be perfect long before it is destroyed. Better let the sciences keep pace with each other.”

Olive, who had left the room, soon came back in a rowing-suit, which admirably set off her lithe figure and her happy face. Mr. Kimen hopped up, expectant. With entire disregard of him, she turned to her aunt, saying, “You know I promised to go with the crowd on the river ; then we are to land at Mrs. Patch’s and have a candy-pull in her kitchen.”

“Miss Cadwallader, I beg you, don’t go on the river in such company ; let me take you,” entreated the young man.

“Oh,” replied she, with her mock gravity, “the crowd is our gang of girls,—the set I go with here.” To her aunt she added, “I am going to stop for the little village schoolma’am. She has not had an outing this summer; we persuaded her to go.”

“May I escort you to her house?” inquired Mr. Kimen.

“Oh, thank you awfully, but there is no need of it; she is our next-door—or our next-yard—neighbor.”

“Then I will remain with Miss Curtis, unless she sends me to the hotel,” was the offended reply.

And Mr Kimen sat himself down and made an ellipse of his forefinger and thumb, at which he gazed for several moments.

Olive went off in vague perplexity, but soon forgot both it and its cause. The row up the river restored her consciousness of strength. When they reached Mrs. Patch’s kitchen it was redolent with the smell of

West India molasses. This already had been put on to boil, for the woman was very particular about the length of time needed for it to come to a boil, and never allowed any interference with her methods. It was soon turned out into greased platters, and when it was somewhat cool, the fun of pulling began.

The girls wore sensible white aprons, yet with a bit of ribbon tucked somewhere ; for what maiden can forego the coquetry of a bow ? A few of the boys consented to have dish-towels pinned around them. There was much finessing over the removal of rings. One declared that her fingers had grown so plump that she could not get off the amethyst bearing her initials set in cheap pearls. Another said her hands had grown so thin that her topaz, made strong in color by its yellow mountings, was always slipping off. The boys held out their little fingers, that the girls might twist off their flat seal rings and make many apologies

for hurting them so much. No one had any which fitted comfortably. Olive had taken off her alexandrite and put it into her pocket, unobserved as she hoped. But she overheard Polly telling Sukey that she supposed Miss Cadwallader felt badly with nothing but just that bilious-looking stone.

They all paired off at their voluntary work of pulling. Some looked like employees in a rope-walk, as they walked up and down the dim woodshed, which opened out of the kitchen. They rolled the thick, sticky chunks over and over in their buttered hands, then stretched them out into long yellow filaments. These they doubled up in the middle and again drew them out. As the molasses cords grew stronger by the alternate process of lengthening and shortening, the brilliant sunflower color faded into a creamy white. The various couples who were weaving the separate strands yielded to those who were deftest. Three of the cords were woven into one close, heavy

braid, an inch wide, an inch thick, and two feet long.

Olive had not caught the secret of greasing her palms with neither too much nor too little butter ; therefore she had constant recourse to scraping them with a knife, or else she dipped them into cold water to remove the molasses which covered them, so that she might begin again, until she gave up the task as hopeless. Shelling peanuts was much easier, and was also a necessary part of the business. So she and the one boy who wore a blazer which he had just imported from the city, devoted themselves to preparing the nuts for the surplus molasses.

The girls best known for their culinary skill pushed up their sleeves to their dimpled elbows and manufactured popcorn molasses-balls, which every one admired but no one ate. Stale jokes were cracked, such as, "Candy-pulls make dentists' harvests ;" "Use plenty of elbow grease ;"

“Hope you are not like your candy, — no stick in you.”

Then the great pot and the numerous pans and plates were laid aside, tables and chairs pushed back, and such dancing began as Olive had never tried. The creaking violin and the jerky accordeon caused the steps of each one to be spontaneous. Olive joined in it all with zest. The Portland Fancy was the serenest performance; the Swedish dance made the rafters ring with the chorus, “There is one wide river to cross.” They all got wound up and then unwound themselves. If some one stumbled over a molasses drop on the floor, she was pulled up before she was down.

They ended with a genuine blindfolded Ruth-and-Jacob frolic, in which each girl, always evading, still spurred on her partner to fresh search for her. Olive was too light-footed to be easily caught; yet as she called out to her Jacob, “Here I am,” and then was at the other end of the room

before his outstretched arms had touched her, she felt as if she were playing the game of life with Mr. Kimen. Historical reminiscences of marriage by capture, and brides with dishevelled hair, gave piquancy and fleetness to her motions, which made her the despair of the boys and the envy of the girls. When at last Jacob caught her, Kimen's name and a shudder escaped her, just enough to make her pursuer give a low whistle and mutter, "Spooks, I ain't that fellow!"

"But I am your Ruth," pleaded Olive, in such beseeching tones that he whispered to her confidingly, as he tied the handkerchief over her eyes, —

"Say, now, I won't tell any of them that you've got a beau, but I'm your Jacob all the same to-night."

Olive shuddered.

CHAPTER XXI.

HIRED HELP.

MR. KIMEN devoted himself to Miss Curtis, endeavoring to treat Olive as if she were a child. The old lady seemed wearied with his painstaking attentions; he failed to rouse her by his contradictions. Olive grew merry under his negligence, and bewildered him with her sweetness. He, on the other hand, suffered; for there was little exterior life in the town to understand, and he knew not how to reach the interior of human existence. He was so good, he was so unsympathetic. He resembled an outline map; his mind was full of leading directions, yet each part of it lacked color.

He had a little travelling bookcase which, inverted and padlocked, became a trunk. This he carried with him wherever he went, for it enabled him to offer the use of good books to his fellowmen, and also to improve himself. It never occurred to him to profit by the thought and knowledge which lay about in other volumes on people's centre-tables and which lurked in gossip.

As the hot days increased, Miss Curtis had stayed at home and had sent Olive on her investigating tours among her families. Upon the girl's return the two consulted together concerning the condition of the crops and the new implements for making farming easy, of which Olive knew nothing; and also about the peculiarities of the people and the best ways of helping them help themselves.

Mr. Kimen was often present at these reviews of character and agricultural prospects, and became depressed. His logical

mind could not follow the intuitive processes by which the ladies arrived at right conclusions. He felt self-reproached by the energy with which Miss Curtis blamed women for being sickly and patient, when he had supposed that such tendencies were a necessary part of woman's existence and of her proper fulfilment of duty.

But Miss Curtis had an invincible dislike of illness. She neither knew how to endure it herself, nor how to tolerate it in others. She considered sickness a foregone conclusion of the neglect of the laws of health. People had no business to be ill; it was their own fault, though she acknowledged it was necessary to reform one's grandmother in order to be perfectly healthy.

Mr. Kimen had moved from the hotel and was boarding in the family of a weak woman, a Mrs. Jones, who did all the work of the household. Her submission to the obligations of life so appealed to his own sense of fatigue that he decided

it would be best to approach Miss Curtis upon the subject, and at least draw some deductions from her views concerning it.

“Does she do her own work?” asked that lady.

“Yes.”

“And her husband’s, and her children’s, and the farm hands’, and the boarders’?”

“Why, she works for them all; it is not exactly their work she does.”

“And brings the water from the well a hundred yards off, and does a little hay-raking when times are lively in August?” still further inquired Miss Curtis.

“Of course, she must keep things going,” was the man’s reply.

“And makes butter to sell, and looks after the hens and chickens, and milks the cows?” continued the lady.

“I don’t know that she performs the last item. She wants to earn a little herself, and —”

“Fiddlesticks!” interrupted Miss Curtis.

“Is n’t her husband’s money hers, without going to work on her own account? You want me to help such a woman! The sooner she has her life-long vacation the better. The next world would n’t amount to much if husbands were allowed there! I might subscribe for a woman’s paper for her; she could get some sympathy out of it. They are full of labor-saving stories about marriage, and how to make one’s husband come to terms. Never subscribe for them if you are ever married and want peace. It is only old maids who should read them; yet it does not do them much good, after all, for they always take the part of the brothers, and think how their sisters-in-law ought to keep at it all the time. You know sisters-in-law are not women, unless you happen to be one yourself. Olive, you had better go and see Mrs. Jones;” and she stopped, tired by her indignant words.

“Perhaps I might be of use in showing

you the way," said Mr. Kimen, reflectively. "Shall we go now?"

His late disregard of Olive had put her off her guard, and she carelessly consented.

"I am pleased to find I can be of service to you," remarked Mr. Kimen as they went down the road.

His grateful tone aroused Olive's independence. She could not tolerate his subserviency even in so slight a matter.

"Seems to me, Mr. Kimen, you are always thinking whether you can be of use, instead of whether people like you."

Her retort angered him, and he answered, "Their liking depends on themselves more than it does upon me."

It was now the girl's turn to flush.

"Oh, you are not such a fixed quantity! Some days you are unbearable, you are so bent on improving the world."

"I thought you liked to help people," he replied, with a slight emphasis on the pronoun "you."

“I do,” she answered; “but I want to make them happy in their way, and you want to improve them in your way. Everybody has solitary days and gets tired of being lonely. What people want is sympathy and love. By and by they may like books and ideas; but you try to make them care for their minds more than for their hearts.”

“The mind widens the heart,” he replied soberly.

“You make me think of a friend,” said Olive, “who had a bad father and an anxious mother. They sent their daughter away from home to the Art Museum. She was not artistic, but they thought the influences of art were elevating. She went there daily and tried to get sublime; but the purer the art was, the lonelier she felt. She just wanted to go and do something, and she became an Associated Charities Visitor and grew happy; and her happiness rested her mother and reformed her father.”

Fortunately they had reached the house, for Kimen was too adrift to reply. Then Olive bethought herself whether she should ask for fresh butter or for old furniture; but with the feeble pretence of being thirsty and liking well-water (there was no other kind in the village), she drew the woman into a conversation.

“Don’t I get tired?” said Mrs. Jones, on being questioned. “Of course I do, but there ain’t no help for it when you’ve started in. It’s more than most women can do to keep agoing; but I ain’t one o’ the city kind, that takes naps.”

“Can’t you go to bed early?” asked Olive.

“Oh, I generally contrive to sleep a bit when I’m mending. I gits used to the rents in the shirts and putting new seats into the pants. Socks, I just let go till I refoot ’em, and that I do ’long ’t is dark.”

“Your children help you some?” asked Olive.

“Off and on consider’bl’; but we’ve all got a mother’s feelings, and I don’t like to see my girls a-slaving round. I like to look at ’em as pretty picters, and dress ’em up.”

Olive’s interest suddenly became intense when she discovered the tenderness of Mrs. Jones’s nature.

“Still, you must not do too much yourself unless you have help,” she argued.

“Hired help, you mean. No; my husband thinks that’s wasteful. When he married me, he didn’t calklate on gitting a girl to wait on me.”

“I should think you’d want house-help just as he has farm-help.”

“I suppose I might, if I had been brought up differently. You can’t get hired help that’s spry; they all rather go to the hotel and earn more wages than I can give ’em. Then, I don’t git on well with ’em. It riles me to see help sitting down when there’s a heap of work to be done.”

“Each one wants some time to herself,” interposed Olive, on behalf of all female employees.

“Well, it ain’t accordin’ to natur’. When I’m drove with work, I want every one to git out of my way or else stir round fast as I do ; and since help’s got so mighty contractin’, all you can git in the country is widders, or worse, with their babies. They are all peaked or down in the mouth ; there’s no power of work in ’em and no staying put.”

“Yet you are all worn out yourself,” urged Olive.

“Well, I am nigh ’most killed with work, that’s a fact ; but that ain’t no reason why I don’t want to kill others. I don’t want my daughters, though, to lead my kind o’ life. I rather they’d marry some of them city drummers and travel round with ’em and their boxes.”

Olive could not quite comprehend, any better than Mr. Kinen, this maternal fond-

ness and this stolid endurance of conditions, which energy differently applied could change. As the two walked back home, after having drunk the well-water, he turned to his companion, saying, —

“There is a case where opening the mind would make the affections of more worth.”

“Yes,” replied Olive; and then, as if she were an ancient dame, she added slowly: “I’ve often noticed how animal-like is a mother’s fondness. She keeps her daughters as she would her lap-dogs; she never seems to think that her girls have got to be fitted to take care of themselves. I shall tell Miss Curtis that she could send the woman tonics to keep her going. Don’t you really think, though, that it is the way women start with their husbands in the beginning that makes the difference?” and Olive looked up in the young man’s face as simply as if he were an octogenarian.

“Really, now, Miss Cadwallader, I have never had any experience. If I might be permitted to hope that you would teach me, I —”

Before he had time to finish his sentence, Olive saw into what a dilemma she had betrayed herself. Too wise to escape, or to show her suddenly-aroused consciousness, she quietly entered the gate, which they had reached, saying, —

“I have told you before, Mr. Kimen, that your habit of indulging in personalities checked friendship.”

She closed the latch upon him, leaving him on the outside, and with an indifferent nod walked up the cobble-stone path.

CHAPTER XXII.

GOOD-BY.

THE next day brought Mr. and Mrs. Cadwallader and their son. Miss Curtis had sent for them and lodged them at the hotel, still keeping Olive with her.

“Oh, Jac-mamma!” said the girl, seating herself on the broad arm of the rocking-chair in which her mother was resting, and pulling out the few gray hairs which showed themselves on Mrs. Cadwallader’s forehead, “don’t you want to matronize me? Miss Curtis treats me as if I were a responsible being, and asks my advice, and Mr. Kimen doesn’t want me to be frivolous; and I am tired!”

“Is he going to succeed?” asked her mother.

“Never; and I am tired of telling him so, and I don’t know what’s the matter with me, and I want to cry.”

“Had an offer, Olive?” said Owen, coming out from the deep window-seat, which had so hidden him from view that his sister had forgotten he was present.

“Only half an one,” answered she, saucily.

“That’s honest, anyhow,” replied her brother. “I wish more girls could see the difference between attentions and intentions. We fellows can afford to be very free with the first, but it takes capital to be serious. What is there to do here,—any pretty girls, or trout-fishing?”

“You’ll find yourself caught before you catch, if you try any society dodges,” said his sister.

“Don’t lecture, Olive. I have improved. I’m not going to be a snob and snub any one. I’m going to rusticate here awhile, and save up money enough to go off and

have a good time. It's the bother of an allowance, that parents don't permit themselves any little pecuniary gifts to help a fellow out; they are stern, and make you live within the limits, or go without."

Owen measured with his eye the distance between the low balcony and the ground, vaulted over, and was out of sight round the corner. Somehow his sister felt relieved. His free speech or his want of earnestness jarred upon her. For weeks she had been identifying herself with Miss Curtis's interests, and the interposition of another set of claims was too sudden to be welcome.

As she and her mother strolled over the fields, she told Mrs. Cadwallader of her undefined anxieties, which shaped themselves chiefly into a fear that Miss Curtis was growing very old. Olive parted with her mother at that lady's door, and continued her solitary walk along the river-bank. She turned into a by-path she had never before

noticed, drawn onward by the fragrance of the hay-mounds. Looking up, she found her way barred by a honeysuckle hedge enclosing a little clearing, where grew huge clusters of white dahlias and beds of pansies and myrtles. The pine woods beyond, carpeted with bunch-berries, rustled with the sighing winds of death. She was sure Miss Curtis called her; but it was the voice of Mr. Kimen, who, unseen, had come from the other end of the woods. She at once felt protected by his presence, and he saw that at last he was welcome.

“Who lies there?” she asked, pointing to the shining mounds.

“Miss Curtis’s father and mother; an old man told me so whom I met in the woods yesterday,” he answered.

The girl crossed her arms and drew in her shoulders, thus shrinking away from the host of dim memories which, invoked by those woods, surrounded her. Then, as if she would send the touch of human love

into their graves, she plucked a pansy and fastened it in her dress. Moved by subtle sympathy she bent again, gathered another, and handed it to Mr. Kimen. Silently they turned back into the sunlit pathway.

“Miss Cadwallader, you have faith in me?” said he, after several minutes.

“Entire,” was the brief answer.

“But you do not put your trust in me?”

“No,” she answered as briefly.

“Why not?”

“Because you are not yet grown.”

“Yet you have faith?”

“Yes; for I know you will do what you think right, though your idea of right may not be mine. If we agreed, it would be trust; faith applies to character, trust to person.”

“Shall I ever convince you?”

“Never.”

“Will you ever convince me?”

“Yes.”

“Of what?”

“That life is beautiful, that love is freedom, that truth is sympathy, that happiness is the fulfilment of growth,” she answered impetuously.

“Miss — Olive, — life is hard; love is bondage; truth is weary search; happiness cannot be reached here.”

“Mr. Kimen, dear Mr. Kimen!” — the man started, but her intensity was too impersonal for him to be misled by it, — “you are all wrong; you are great, noble, but you want to hold the solution of every mystery in your open palm, and let us read it as in a book. We want to sing as we go along, or else lie cradled in reverent trust. You would explain, improve; we would wait and watch. You have taken the world into your keeping; we have asked God to let us help Him. Mr. Kimen,” and she held out her hand.

He took it and looked upon it, perhaps reading the future in its lines. He folded

his left hand over it, as if he would cherish it forever, and said, "Olive!"

"Good-by, dear Mr. Kimen."

"Good-by, dear Olive."

He lifted her hand as if he would kiss it, but stopped and placed his own upon her head. She gazed up into his eyes trustingly. He stooped and took the pansy from her button-hole, methodically drew out his pocket-book, and placed the flower inside. He shut it and put it back in his pocket very slowly, Olive still gazing at him.

"Forever, Olive?" he asked in questioning tone.

"Forever," she answered solemnly.

He stepped backwards, backwards, for he could not lose her from his sight, while she stood with folded hands and bowed head, waiting. The path turned and he was hid from her sight. Still she stood there. Did he mean that he would keep her pansy forever, or did he mean that he

had bid her good-by forever? What had she meant? She knew not how to answer her own questions, and a rush of sorrow or compassion swept over her.

The moon was rising when Olive returned home. She found her father and mother still talking with Miss Curtis, and by the way in which her father drew her to his side she knew they had been talking of her. She rested again in the safest love a girl ever knows, — her father's.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AFTER-THOUGHTS.

IT took Mr. Kimen a long while to readjust his equanimity. Olive had shown her disapproval of him; he had been roused out of his own notion of duty, but had had no facts given him to tabulate. He had not been playing any game, yet he had a vague sense of loss; that he had missed opportunity. Opportunity for what? He and Olive had not quarrelled; friends often say good-by when they are to meet the next day. He was a great deal older than she; it ought to have been a privilege for her to be associated with a man like himself, devoted to high pursuits. Yet she had found him tiresome. He tried to find fault with her to himself, but he could

not. He had seen too much of her daily home-life not to recognize that she was perpetually making other people happy,—doing the little chores of friendship which take off the burden of petty cares from others. That she did all this without any sense of self-sacrifice or self-justification was a real, personal grievance to him.

He had seldom seen her read or perceptibly improve her mind, yet she was always able to relate events to causes, and could penetrate the inner consciousness of an author without believing that his characters and incidents were necessarily drawn from real life.

It provoked him that she was happy. He felt a ghoulisn pleasure in thinking that she would see things differently whenever she was brought face to face with the death of a dear friend. It angered him still more, that he knew she felt he was lacking in grace of mind and character, and that she did not consider that his earnestness atoned

for his being tiresome. He knew, too, that she saw he was always making himself up; that he was always prying out some unrecognized factor which was to benefit mankind. He felt that she, young as she was, had already attained results in rectifying other people's lives which he, with all his serious consideration of their affairs, had not reached.

Over all his mortification and sense of failure was the feeling of loss. He had met a human soul which could have shone into his life, and he had been too preoccupied to make room for it. Now he was lonely. He had dreamed for months of being her guide, had held her hand, had touched her hair! What did it avail? She ought to need him; she only cared for him impersonally. He would have taken her as a holy cause and battled for her; but he had missed the power of her sweet brightness, and she had missed the power of his purpose, — a purpose so set that it would hurt

its own friend rather than not hew out the accomplishment of its truth. He knew, too, that their purposes were alike; both lived for others, only their ways were so different that the likeness in purpose was hidden.

He knew that never again could the sense of failure press upon him so heavily; that never again could the abnegation of personal love raise him to such a height of renunciation as to leave her whom he needed, rather than to insist upon appropriating her. He remembered how she had stood before him, radiant in her graceful earnestness. He tried to classify his impressions for the future benefit of others. It was impossible; nothing came clearly before him but his lonely, working life, and the longing to make her work with him.

He lingered in the village two or three days, not even attempting to see her. He wished to do nothing in a hurry, yet knew

he had nothing to do. A sense of decent gratitude and civility made him mindful of his obligation to Miss Curtis. He went to pay his farewell respects to her.

His presence during his summer visit had acted like a nettle-rash upon her, and stung her with a constant desire to aggravate him. Whatever elderly fondness she had cherished for him had dwindled into a wish to think kindly of him at a distance.

"I'm going to see my mother," said he to Miss Curtis, when he called.

"It is high time you cultivated her affections," she answered.

"I have never neglected her. I have tried to do my duty. I am her son," he replied.

"Mothers don't value forced affections. It is mortifying to have to be loved on account of relationship. How long shall you be gone?"

"I may not come back again. Just now in my studies there is a phase of life

which I think it might be useful for me to study, — the community side, — and I propose to make an examination of it.”

“Lots of failures have been buried in communities,” remarked Miss Curtis.

“I agree with you; and I want to study them so that I can better comprehend the life of the individual, and be able to aid the world.”

“Is he an idiot?” thought Miss Curtis as she shook hands with him, half sorry to lose from her own circle such a constant spur to her mental reflections upon the uselessness of philanthropic desire without corresponding executive ability.

It was evident to Olive that Miss Curtis was glad Mr. Kimen had gone, though she wondered why her aunt was relieved. That lady, however, did not feel wholly at ease. Olive had somehow eluded her comprehension. She had rejoiced in the girl’s power of reserve, but she did not wish it exercised upon herself. Her plans were made.

There had been hours, and latterly moments, when she thought they might be put into action.

At twilight — for she had been too feeble through the week to take her usual sunset walk — she called Olive to her side.

“Child, what is this new notion of Kimen’s about going into a community?”

Olive looked surprised.

“Don’t you know about it?” asked her aunt.

“No,” answered the girl; “I supposed he was still going to study.”

“He’s going to try life in the aggregate; but he won’t resolve it any better,” said Miss Curtis.

“Poor Mr. Kimen,” replied Olive; “I am so sorry for him, and — so sorry for myself.”

“What’s the trouble, child?”

“Nothing; only he isn’t agreeable to me, and yet I like him so much. He won’t take my advice, he won’t keep his beard short, and yet when it is trimmed, he looks

like an apotheosized apostle in a revelation ;” and she sighed.

“Why did n’t you tell him to cut it ?”

“That ’s just it, aunt. There is no way of making him do frivolous things. He lifts you up on the heights, because it seems grand to live for ideas and wish to benefit mankind ; but then you collapse and want to wear pretty gowns, and he can’t follow you, and you can’t have sympathy with dictionaries all the time ; he is always explaining what things mean, and never listening. If he went sailing, he would do all the work ; he ’d never lie over the bow and look down into the water and do nothing.”

“He is very good,” said Miss Curtis, apologetically.

“Yes, very good,” assented Olive, “and not conceited ; but there is neither poetry nor ability in him yet. If he had one or the other, I would n’t mind. He is the kind that could have a sunstroke and not know it was the sun which hurt him.”

“Philanthropists who don’t do any good are generally impervious,” answered Miss Curtis. “But it is n’t their fault ; they are born weather-beaten.”

“I should n’t think he could be any comfort to his mother,” said Olive, reflectively. “Yet, aunt, I was so sorry for him that I almost loved him. I never liked him. I wanted him to be happy ; but he never could see the stars were shining, for there were so many clouds in his way. I wish I could feel as sublime as he did ; it must be splendid.”

It was Miss Curtis who sighed.

“It might have been better for you two if you could have got on together,” she said.

Olive thought of the white dahlias, and of the two who lay beneath the myrtle mounds ; of her own father and mother ; of Mr. Kimen’s hand upon her head, and wondered if love meant getting on together. Aloud she answered, —

“ We could n’t, as things are now. We did n’t agree about anything. He wished to be in a state of perpetual consciousness that he had a great subject in his mind, and so he would forget to brush his coat. And I want my dress to fit well ; and then it is fun to surprise people by making them happy. There are so many little ways of doing it, that it keeps me jumping up all the time. Aunt Curtis — ” And Olive pushed the crochet-needle into the afghan which she always carried with her to work upon at twilight, and on which she made no perceptible progress.

“ Well,” said Miss Curtis, with a pleased accent.

“ I ’ve got to see him again,” spoke Olive.

“ When ? ” asked her aunt, with a sudden, anxious change of voice.

“ When he is younger and I am older. I want to see if he changes.”

“ And if he does not ? ” questioned the elder lady.

“Then I would rather go down with the sun alone ;” and Olive pointed to the golden streaks which flecked the sky as the upper edge of the great amber ball sank below the western hills.

“He will never change,” said Miss Curtis to herself.

CHAPTER XXIV.

LITTLE MAMMA.

ANOTHER week had gone in an unusual round of picnics, furnished with pretty girls, Wisteria wood-plates, Japanese napkins, transparent sandwiches, and coffee in tumblers, which had satisfied even Owen's sense of nineteenth-century civilization. He, however, considered country dances as too unconventional, and requiring a great deal of labor from a young man. He much preferred his Boston slide, which left all the work to his partner. Olive, having once introduced him, was scarcely surprised to find how soon he knew the girls and their points better than she herself. She, however, found it pleasanter to stay with her mother or her aunt than to be on the alert

for a joke or a repartee, as is expected at social festivals, or else one is accused of being out of sorts.

As Miss Curtis had not come down to tea one evening, Olive had carried up to her the thin slices of bread-and-butter, the Scotch marmalade, and the *tête-à-tête* set of her aunt's childhood. Miss Curtis tried to care for what was set before her, for Olive's sake; but she wearily pushed back the waiter, and the girl curled herself up on an ottoman at her aunt's feet, ready for a talk. The two were silent for a long while. Suddenly the quiet was broken by the sharp sound of Miss Curtis's voice.

“After all, child, you had better marry before either of your parents die, or things get mixed. It is lonely, when you come to your end, not to know that some one person cares more than all the rest of the world. Besides, it is an advantage to have your life run in a rut and know what your duty is.”

“Is n’t there duty outside of marriage as well as inside?” asked Olive.

“Yes; but when it is outside, it is like picking berries in scattered spots. Half of life is knowing just what to do, not floundering about.”

“It is strange,” answered the girl, “that the easier half, the energy to do, comes when you are young, before you know what to do.”

“Mistaken duty, child, is forgetting that the Devil keeps the account against the Almighty,” replied Miss Curtis.

“Jac-mamma says that the Almighty never gives us complex fractions for sums, if we did but know it.”

“He doesn’t, child, he doesn’t. He gave me a simple sum, but I could not do it. I counted by hobbies, and the Almighty by purpose.”

The shadows deepened, as Olive pondered on these words. Was Mr. Kimen incarnate purpose, and herself a will-o’-

the-wisp riding hobbies? At last Miss Curtis spoke, as if she were thinking aloud: "Hobbies are only pretences for having your own way; purpose is the Almighty's education."

She paused; but as if spurred by some sudden emotion, she spoke again in sharper voice.

"Co-education, female colleges, and all the new devices for getting into the kingdom of heaven are hobbies: the age is predestined to them; they will be its ruin. They are devil's claws, they are mirages, they tear out your heart, they lead you astray. Be womanly, child! Be frivolous, be frivolous!"

"I would rather be happy, aunt, because some one needs me," answered Olive, cheerily.

Miss Curtis did not seem to notice her, and continued: "If you are astride a hobby, child, you are in too great a hurry in reaching your own special end to know

when some one needs you. Being cared for because you have money, or because some one is grateful for what has been done for him, makes one very lonely. It is a blessing, Olive, to be loved for yourself alone. Gratitude is nothing but mortgages."

Was Miss Curtis sad, or sardonic, this evening? Olive could not tell. Again the hush fell between the two. Miss Curtis's voice was very gloomy when she next spoke.

"It is very lonely, child, when memory pays the debt which one owes to love. Better put your investments in live-stock at once, than trust to memory for an income."

Miss Curtis clasped and unclasped the silver mountings of the dark-blue velvet bag which she always wore at her waist. Olive laid her hand upon the nervous fingers and held them, saying, —

"Aunt, tell me what it is?"

Such a look of weariness deepened on the dear old face that Olive wished she had not asked her, and she buried her sunny head in the lady's lap as if bowed with the glimpse before her of aged grief and bitterness. Slowly Miss Curtis withdrew her hands, and laying them on the girl's head, lifted it.

"Look at this, child," and she drew out a letter from her bag. "When I die, put this under my cheek, — the right cheek, — and bury it with me."

"Yes, aunt."

"Do you know you have never kissed me there?" said Miss Curtis, touching her own cheek.

"Yes, aunt."

"Well, child, forty-five years ago he touched it, and here is his letter. He is waiting for me now. I shall see him before it is morning."

Olive started.

"Where?" she exclaimed.

“Hush, hush, child!” bade the old lady; “you disturb him. It is very quiet; it is dark.”

“When did you get it, aunt — to-day?”

“The letter is yellow, child, but the envelope is white and clean.”

“Yes, aunt; but it is not post-marked!”

“His envelope is inside this one,” answered Miss Curtis, smiling tenderly.

“Yes,” said Olive; “but the outside one says, if not delivered within ten days to return it to you.”

“It is not a joke,” replied Miss Curtis, grimly. “I took my business envelope and stamped it, that if I lost it I might find it again. When did I get it? Oh, ten, twenty, — twenty-six years ago the 26th of August.”

Olive trembled.

“It seemed longer ago last fall,” added Miss Curtis, “than it does now. It will soon be over.”

“Was he your husband — I mean, were you engaged to him?”

“No.”

“Did you both love each other?”

“Yes.”

“Tell me of it, aunt.”

“I’ve got to go back to before I was born. Olive, thank the Lord that the past is largely accountable for me; all my sins are not wholly of my own causing. But I owe nothing to the future; my faults can’t be transmitted. Heredity is the great titleholder. Folks are just beginning to see the advantages of being born without encumbrances of bad inheritance.”

“‘The sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation,’ ” repeated Olive, thoughtfully.

“Calvinism,” answered Miss Curtis, “believed that of the masses, and laid it all on to Adam. It is only as we have taken the Bible as an allegory, as a picture-book, as

poetry, that we know its truth fits each person. Pull up the curtain, child, it is getting darker. I want to see when I talk. It is a long story."

Olive did as she was bid, came back to her seat, and timidly touched the bag to which Miss Curtis had restored the letter.

"Olive Cadwallader," she began, "I never was a girl; I never had any girlhood; I don't know what it means. It is no matter now. I was born a woman. No one ever told me that I was good-looking. People never said they were glad to see me. I was always in the way; I ran on errands all the time. I was sent to school and wore old-fashioned dresses, which made the girls avoid me. I never got on in my lessons, I was so frightened."

"Did n't you have a mother?" asked Olive, gently.

"Yes, people always do; but my mother was a wife. She married unto the Lord,

and she minded her husband. She died when I was a little girl."

"Don't you remember her?"

Miss Curtis shuddered.

"Yes, I remember her well. One memory has been my curse, because I used to wish she were pretty, like other girls' mothers. It crazes me to think of it. She was very thin, and she never wore any pretty clothes, and her wrists were brown and bony. She seemed all lines, and her hair — that was beautiful. She twisted it so hard that it never came down, for she had no time to put it up; her life was all work. Only when father went away, then — we loved each other! I sat in her lap whole days, just resting; and we'd go to bed early, just to put our arms round each other, and she would hold me close, and I'd take down her hair and braid it into mine; and we'd lay awake all night, and she would never be tired; and she'd call me her baby, her darling, and she was

my little mamma. She taught me hymns and crooned me melodies. When father came home, he was always round ; and she did not dare to love me, and we'd shell peas for dinner without speaking.

“ Sometimes I could find a flower she liked, — a pansy ; but she'd hide it inside her dress so father could n't even smell it. Well — she died. I heard them say, one day, she was going, and that it was a pity father was away, and that they must keep me out of the room. But I went round on the shed and got in at the window and lay down by her, and hid inside the sheets and pretended to be asleep. She put her hand into mine, and I heard them say, ‘ Come in and look at her.’ They came in, and said that she was sleeping quietly, and they guessed she might live a spell longer, though 't was a pity ; and that they would stay in the next room and come in once in a while. We didn't move till they were gone, and then she pulled me up close to

her and whispered, 'Be good, little girl, no matter what comes.' And I told her I'd help her die, so it would n't hurt; and she crawled down a little and put her head on my shoulder, and I put both my arms round her and held her tight."

"And then," said Olive, faintly.

"They took me from her in the morning; and there was a funeral, and — father had a great deal to do."

CHAPTER XXV.

HOBBIES.

THE hush had lasted until Olive became alarmed. She was only a girl, and she did not know how long the aged can sit in silence.

"Aunt Curtis, are you asleep?" she asked.

"Mamma, little mamma!" murmured the lady.

"Aunt Curtis, dear Aunt Curtis!" exclaimed Olive, starting up and bending over her just in time to catch the smile which had made the elderly face as trusting as a child's.

Miss Curtis opened her eyes and looked round expectantly. No one was there but Olive and herself. Slowly she seemed to remember where she was.

“Are you tired, aunt? Don’t you want to lie down?”

“No, child; what was I telling you?”

“You grew up to be a big girl, aunt; you and your father lived together?”

“Oh, yes, I lived with him. We are set in families when we begin. I don’t remember much, except that it was doing duty all the time. It was restraint, sacrifice. I was taken care of somehow. I believe we had a housekeeper. She was active like father, and I was always afraid to cry lest they would hear me. At last I could n’t bear it longer. It was in mother’s chamber; there was one of those Goliaths in the room.”

“‘Goliaths’!” repeated Olive.

“That is what we called those chests in two parts; two sets of narrow drawers on top, and three or four long drawers, the width of the chest, below. It was divided when a family broke up or sold out. That is half of it now,” said Miss Curtis, pointing

to a piece of rich mahogany with brass ornaments. "I put my hand on it, right in the middle where it separated, and talked to father, — I in my petty spite at life and him, and he in his sternness and might of self-denial! I told him that he had no right to give me birth and then take all the pleasure out of life; that it was duty from morning to night; that he gave away all the good things on the farm, and that we lived on Indian meal till I was crushed; that there was not a pretty thing in the house, because the money had gone to help some widow; that there was no time, because it was all spent for others; that there was no love, because something always had to be done. I had no idea of running away, for there was nowhere to go; but I told him that I hated him. Olive, I have been undoing those words fifty-six years; they'll be undone soon."

The girl shivered.

"Are you cold?" asked Miss Curtis, with

a contempt in her tone which was meant for herself more than for Olive.

“No.”

“Nor sleepy?”

“No.”

“It is n’t a pleasant story.”

“Aunt, I can’t bear it!”

“Oh, yes, you can! It is n’t you who said it. It is I—to my own father. There he stood, thin, weak, old; his forehead seemed to denounce me; his eyes underneath it burned me. He had given all his life to others; it had killed my mother,—that was no matter; the world was to be helped, and he had helped east and west, north and south. He had been missionary and teacher, a wanderer and a farmer; and in all, the burden of the Lord had been upon him. I, his child, could comprehend neither his personal devotion, nor his absorption in causes, nor his interest in the conversion of others. His father had left him property, and he had added to it; for

with all his zeal he knew how to make money. But for every dollar he made he labored to save a soul ; he cared for wealth only as means. There were no poor sinners for miles around whom he did not support, that it might give him a claim on them to send them tracts ; and I complained because I had not been petted, when the world needed to be helped ! Oh, Lord ! ” and Miss Curtis trembled.

“Your father ? ” asked Olive.

“I don’t remember. Now I can see that he did not understand me any more than I did him. You can’t tell any kind of a person, especially a man, that his life is a failure, without surprising him. I wish I had never told him.”

She paused as if very tired, and then continued, —

“I had a little camphor trunk, brass-nailed, some animal’s skin on the top ; it was my mother’s. In it were her treasures when she was a girl : her wedding waist, —

she had a small waist,—some dried flowers, a few letters and some missionary relics, and — her journal, left for me, which I was to read when I could n't bear life any longer. I had always known it was waiting for me, but I had put off reading it, hoping that each day would be a little easier for me. I did n't want to go to my own funeral. I read it that night. Poor little mamma! She loved my father when she married him, and she thought it was grand to carry the burden of the Lord, and that she would go with him into the desert-places and make them bloom. But my father never showed her the vision, — only the pain, the duty. She was weak in body ; and when I was born, my father told her to bring me up to be strong and responsible. That weighed upon her. He did n't believe in rocking babies, and he gave her the Psalms to read when I was crying in the dark from terror. She tried to grow up to him and not mind things, and have

great thoughts ; but little mamma needed a God whom she could see. She blamed herself for everything. It never occurred to her that father was wrong. She wanted me to ignore myself and to carry the burden for others.”

Olive thought of Mr. Kimen and moved uneasily. Miss Curtis continued in the monotone into which she had fallen.

“Then I saw how cruel and selfish I had been, and I vowed by my mother’s journal that I would be his companion and outdo him in the burden. So I starved and worked, and nursed the sick and drunken, and improved the character of the town, and took up every new invention of reform, — anything that meant self-sacrifice. As I carried on the Lord’s burden, my father laid it down ; it was killing him, as it had killed my mother. He saw the crucifixion, but never the crown. We had got along better in these latter years ; he had begun to respect me, and though he could n’t love

me, he depended on me and helped me in turn. I was not twenty when there came to our town Henry Norris. I met him first at a funeral." Miss Curtis half smiled. "He came off and on to see us ; I got used to him, and — I loved him."

"Aunt Curtis," exclaimed Olive in high excitement, "you don't mean mamma's brother !"

"Yes. I've snubbed your mother, and badgered your father about his salary, and loved you, because of him ; and now it is all over."

"Does mamma know ?"

"She never told me she did n't, and she never gave me any reason to think she did ; your mother is inscrutable. It comes from having a parish round all the time. But don't set me to wandering to-night. He saw how I was driven by hobbies ; that they jostled against each other ; that there was n't any abidingness in me, only to be doing ; that I was in a perpetual worry ;

that with all my efforts I always came out wrong and made things worse than before, because I wanted to reform the whole of people's lives at once, and was not contented to work in bits and by degrees. Well, I was obstinate; and when he asked me to marry him, I told him that he must promise to take up the work of the Lord in my way and ride my hobbies; and he would n't promise and I would n't yield. We'd go off skipping stones, and he'd talk of the 'faith that made faithful.' But I could never see large. Because he would not weigh out the mint and the anise, I let him go. It is a long while ago, child, and I have been weighing out mint and worm-wood ever since. It has tasted bitter, but I could not give up hobbies."

A look of grim amusement passed over her face as Olive smiled reluctantly.

"Give me a shawl, child. It is very cold."

Olive wound the soft camel's-hair around

her aunt and stroked her hair. After a while she asked, —

“Did you never see him again?”

“Don’t hurry me, Olive. Father died in a year or two, and left me his money and his example. I guess he didn’t know he had so much of either to leave. I have told you about his will before. I suppose he wanted other women to marry, as his atonement to mother. After all was decently over, and I was carrying out his example, Mr. Norris asked me again to marry him; but I had grown hobbier than ever after father’s death, and I couldn’t forget what I had said to him when I stood up by the Goliath. I must pay for it. I had not grown old enough to see that there was a better payment than by renouncing. Never go into self-sacrifice, Olive, until you are sure it is necessary. I went by jerks.”

“How could you do so?” asked Olive.

“Because I did not know it was right to be happy.”

“And uncle’s letter?” ventured Olive.

“Henry’s letter?” said Miss Curtis, wearily. “Oh, it is in this bag; it has always been in it since he sent it to me, twenty-six years ago, just before he died. You remember what I told you, child. Ring the bell for the lights; and leave me. It has grown very dark.”

The candles came, and Olive left her alone.

CHAPTER XXVI.

PURPOSE.

MISS CURTIS died that night. When they went to wake her in the morning, they found the yellow letter under the withered cheek. Reverently Olive fulfilled her promise. If the first death we know is wrapped in tenderness, then it is loneliness, not bitterness, against which we struggle.

Olive was very lonely; but out of her loneliness purpose was deepening. She saw that Miss Curtis had missed the beneficence of happiness, because she had counted an unwilling martyrdom as service, and had always been in rebellion against the forces of her life, — alike those which she had inherited and those which she had created.

Miss Curtis's will was a surprise to all. The bulk of her property was left to Olive on condition that she should carry out the plans which Miss Curtis had already devised, and which were in progress for the benefit of her clients and townspeople. It was not to pass into her entire control for two years, that she might have time to prepare herself for her future work, though even then she would not be at liberty to touch the principal until she was thirty-five. If Olive quailed before the task, the trustees were to expend the principal in establishing a home for single women. A certain portion of the income was to be yearly appropriated to the increase of her father's salary, that he might have more time for sermons and less for economies.

The consternation of Olive was only equalled by the amazement of her brother.

"Now a fellow can live decently," exclaimed Owen, "and can spread at Beck Hall when he graduates. Olive will become a

universal match-maker. What a descent from single motives !”

“Oh,” sighed she, “if I could have a universal woe, an ache, and so bear others’ burdens !”

“Don’t be vicarious !” said the boy. “I hope the papers won’t get hold of it. The house will be a regular Gretna Green, chaplain provided, job done at the lowest price. All the girls will want you to give them a dowry, as did Miss Curtis.”

“Don’t, Owen ! It is an awful responsibility,” besought his sister.

“Now, Olive, just stop a minute,” he replied. “I know something of girls. I can ‘size’ them pretty well. I’ve been ‘sizing’ you lately. You are a ‘daisy,’ but you have made me miserable by looking at me in a responsible light ; and you have not made as much out of yourself for others as you might have done, — that’s your hobby, you know, — because you have been taking yourself responsibly. Why,

we fellows never could get through college if we put ourselves under serious consideration."

"Oh, Owen, I wish you would!" interrupted the girl, pathetically.

"Olive, let me alone, and don't spoil my sequences. I've forgotten where I was. But this is what I mean. Miss Curtis has been a trump. It's going to help father lots. I tell you, Olive, I've given up no end of good times, and subscribing to college things, because of those accounts of his, which have to be squared before he can get at his sermon. Now, I'm out again! Oh, I know what I was going to say! Don't take this will-business hard; don't look at it as a responsibility. Of course it's an awful one, — trust funds, and all that; but it's a first-class privilege to have money, and to help fellows. Don't bother as to whether you are worthy of it or not. Have a good time about it. Be jolly. You help people a great deal more when you

are not solemn. I'll stand by you and pull you through."

Olive looked at him half provoked, half amused. He had good sense, but he was so patronizing. She did not dare to answer him, for whatever she should say about herself might be untrue, at least partial, as she did not yet comprehend her feelings. After a second she said in humble tone, "Thank you," and left the room before her brother could reply. Owen whistled.

Olive stayed much by herself for several days. A day seems like a week to a young girl. Her mother, just because she was her mother, did not intrude upon the workings of her child's mind. In all this time Olive hardly thought, much less reasoned; she simply gave herself up to the varying moods which poured themselves over her physically and mentally. She never was in despair, she hardly felt adrift; only she knew not where to land. She was aware

that her childish sense of responsibility had overcome her for a while ; but she was sure that she had outgrown the notion that there was any more work for her to do in the world than she could do.

She planted pansies on the fresh mound ; she lay dreaming in the sunshine ; she climbed the cliff from which she had seen Miss Curtis kneeling among her people. Late one afternoon she pushed off her boat from the river-bank and rowed far up into the sunset. Her oars played back and forth against the phosphorescent beads of water ; the clouds lay above as plumes of gold, as layers of opal against a pale blue sky. Great sweeps of roseate hue, feathery specks of brilliancy, were transformed into the clearness of amber light. The moods, the doubt, the sense of responsibility, which had so burdened her, passed into the glowing clouds, into the shadowy earth, into the sparkling water. Olive, freed from the unreal burdens which Nature had taken

unto herself, reached the shore with a few vigorous strokes born of her release from fear. She pulled in her boat and threw back her head against the sky, with a light in her eyes that made human expression more than sunset glory.

That night the mother and daughter talked together like two friends.

"It seems odd that I should be hesitating about accepting a trust instead of an offer," said Olive with a half smile, as if almost ashamed to compare the two.

"To accept marriage," said Jac-mamma, "is to assume a so much greater trust, that I am thankful this one of work has come to you first."

"I can do this," answered Olive, thoughtfully. "I don't know what I want in regard to the other."

"Nor whom?" asked her mother.

"No," said Olive, in such a sure tone that her mother was assured. "I suppose, now," the girl continued, "that Aunt Curtis

must have been purposely educating me to help others in practical ways. If I did laugh a little to myself at her character book-keeping, it proved her insight into people and her executive ability in managing them. Did you and father talk me over with her?"

"Yes; that was the reason she sent for us. We could not refuse her, and the two years she has permitted you for preparation gives you time to make mistakes in plans and to correct them in action."

"Oh, you wise, funny mamma! Well, I know one thing already. I am going to apply philosophy to my study of my people." Her use of the possessive pronoun showed that she had already unconsciously adopted Miss Curtis's clients. "There are causes for all the bothers; just helping individual cases don't help the next generation so much as finding out what makes the misery of the present time. And there is another thing I'm not going to do. I'm not going

to tell poor people, or any one else, that morality is its own justification; but I'm going to tell them there is a heaven as sure as there is a sunset, and that things will be made all right there."

Her mother smiled at the girl's enthusiasm, adding calmly, "It is the force of personality that makes us need philosophy to correct our intensity; it is the truth of personality which makes us demand God and his heaven; and it is the personality of God which gives us prayer."

"One of Jac-mamma's life-sermons," said Olive, touching her mother's hands.

Just then the door opened with that breezy effect which precedes the appearance of a boy, and Owen entered.

"Monologue or dialogue, which is it?" he asked.

"Neither, now," answered Olive, trying at once to hide her deeper feeling from his healthy want of sentiment; yet knowing that she could not wholly succeed, she sud-

denly thought it best to admit him to a limited partnership in her emotion. In a half-saucy, half-timid manner, she asked :

“Do you remember our first call, hand in hand, and how we congratulated ourselves upon getting through our part?”

“It was all gammon,” declared Owen.

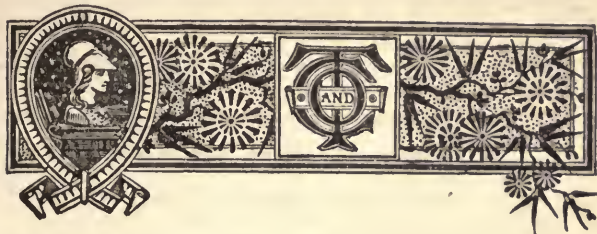
“No, it was n’t,” asserted Olive. “We thought out beforehand what we ought to do, and so we got through with it.”

“Don’t moralize, Olive; leave that to Jac-mamma. She must settle for us the proportions of life, between purpose and hobbies, conventions and freedom.”

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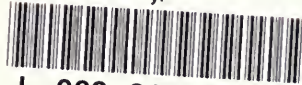
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